ABSTRACT

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between subjective definition of situations and the objective cultural continuity that links one situation with other like situations. It was proposed that rules of operation in situations, here called situated rules, provide a structure within which any culturally standardized situation operates and through which a situation is recognizable as the same from one instance of its occurrence to another. It was further proposed that individuals construct their subjective definitions of the situation with reference to situated rules, and that differences in situations due to differing situational definitions can be accounted for by optional elaborations that accompany situated rules.

Data were collected from two sources. First, approximately thirty-three "country auctions" were observed to determine the nature of the continuity that inhered between them.

Second, a school for auctioneers was attended and observed as a means of uncovering the auctioneer's role in preservation of the observed situational continuity.

Qualitative data collection techniques were used throughout the study with a heavy reliance on participant and non-participant observation, unstructured interviews, and the

review of tape-recorded materials.

Uniformities evidencing themselves consistently from one auction to another were identified and subsequently stated in the form of a body of twenty-eight rules. These rules were seen to characterize and limit the auction in such a way as to preserve continuity from one occasion to the next. No definite conclusions were reached regarding the specific relation between the identified situated rules and subjective situational definitions, but individual rule usage indicated that individuals do indeed use appropriate rule elaborations to better fit the situation to individual goals for that situation. Furthermore, it was found that individuals who misuse rules or their elaborations in the course of defining the situation are sanctioned for such misuse.

CULTURAL CONTINUITY IN SUBJECTIVE DEFINITION OF SITUATIONS

by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

INTRODUCTION

The following is an investigation of the relationship between "definition of the situation" and cultural continuity. Two elements in any situation, a subjective definition of the situation and an objective cultural continuity linking that situation to other like situations, seem always present yet somehow at odds. Take, for example, the culturally defined act of using the telephone. On the one hand, this is a situation recognizable by any member of a telephone using society. The mere mention of "telephone conversation" to any in-the-know actor is enough to conjure up in his mind the entire process involved in competently carrying out a telephone conversation. On the other hand, each and every telephoner has his own subjective impression, different from all others, of the act of telephoning; the act has an individual subjective meaning, a private meaning. For some, telephoning is a tool to be used in an emergency, to others, it is a way to occupy the day, to still others it is simply an aid in conducting one's business. But running through these divergent meanings is a held-in-common thread, a public identity that preserves for all the above conversation the label, "telephone conversation." This research is an attempt to identify the elements in public identity that provide continuity in any socially recognizable situation and to

examine how those elements are related to, affect, or are affected by subjective definitions of the situation. We shall attend to the possibility that continuity or public identities, are simply collections of rules for performance in situation, rules that adhere to and guide conduct in particular contexts, that is, "situated rules."

Every culturally standardized situation or activity has inherent in it "rules" of operation that allow for an activity such as "telephone conversation" to be easily and consistently identified as such (see Garfinkel, 1963; Cicourel, 1970). Consequently, one's personal or subjective definition of the situation is informed by these "rules" and tempered by them. Conversely, rules are elaborated on by individuals in culturally approved ways the better to conform to personal situational definitions.

The reader should not infer that a world behind the world, an ontology, is being posited. We suggest nothing concerning essences, i.e., nothing along the line of "telephoneness." Instead, the following phenomenological, rather than ontological, presuppositions provide the theoretical grounding for this research.

1. The phenomenal world is all that exists. This world is patternless and without order except for the order that man gives it.
2. The phenomenal world is meaningful only insofar as persons assign meaning to it.

> 3. All persons are engaged in the ongoing activity of making sense of, making meaningful, their everyday experience.
>
> 4. Culturally standardized activity is activity resting on consensus. Culturally standardized activity tends to repeat itself over time in any given culture. Culturally standardized activity is everyday activity from the actor's viewpoint and although, governed by cultural rules, is problematic and must be constantly adjusted in the light of changing and emergent situations. (Garfinkel, 1963)

The research itself was carried out in a field setting. A form of economic negotiation and exchange, the auction, was observed as the culturally standardized activity situation in which consistent lines of activity had to be constructed by participants. The examination of individually constructed definitions is not of concern. Rather, the focus is on constructions observed as typical, i.e., public identities, and their relation to the situation.

Beginning with an examination of the concepts of "definition of the situation" and of "situated" and "non-situated" rules of interaction in Chapter One, we will then proceed in Chapter Two to detail the methodological commitments and the procedures employed in studying the above concepts. Chapter Three describes the situation under study, the auction. Chapter Four examines the specific situated

rules discovered to be in use in the auction setting and the elaborations that accompany them. Chapter Five addresses how those rules preserve cultural continuity even though subjective definitions of the situation may indicate action that differs from them. It then discusses how situated rules generally relate to definition of the situation and what our findings concerning situated rules imply for future research.

CHAPTER I

THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Definition of the Situation

The concept, definition of the situation, is a comparatively old one in the literature, but one that has yet remained surprisingly underdeveloped (see Waller, 1961:292). It has gained widespread usage as a useful term describing the relation between actor's subjective perceptions and his environment, but there has appeared very little actual empirical research on the concept. In view of this, it will be referred to as a concept and not a theory for it lacks specification, evidence, and the logical deductive system expected of theory.

The concept itself, of course, was introduced by W. I. Thomas in 1928 with the now famous quote: "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences." (Thomas, 1928:572) From the very beginning this concept revolved intimately around the idea that men create situations, not situations, men. The world of the actor was divided between his subjective perceptions and the "objective world out there" he manipulated.

Thus, Edmund Volkart in his introduction to works by Thomas said, in summarizing the essential aspects of Thomas' work:

> The human situation often includes some factors common to both the observer and the actor, such as the physical environment, relevant social norms and the behavior of others . . . . The human situation also includes some factors that exist only for the actors, i.e., how they perceive the situation, what it means to them, what their 'definition' of the situation is. (Volkart, 1951:2)

Volkart goes on to say that Thomas felt that both aspects of any definition were equally important and merited investigation.

In a general discussion of "definition of the situation" Willard Waller says:

> It is the process in which the individual explores the behavior possibilities of a situation, marking out particularly the limitation which the situation imposes upon his behavior, with the final result that the individual forms an attitude toward the situation, or, more exactly, in the situation. (1970:162)

This dichotomy between the objective and subjective aspects of any situational definition runs consistently through the literature. Kurt Wolff, in formulating a definitive statement of the concept for a social science dictionary, noted as central to his definition that both ". . . The individual agent's perception . . . of any situation . . . [and] culturally formulated, embodied, and shared perceptions . . ." (1964:182) make up any single actor's definition of his surroundings.

Max Weber, in Robert Merton's sense the anticipator of Thomas' original concept points to four possible orientations

in his treatment of the modes of social action:

> 1. Strictly traditional behavior, like the reactive type of imitation discussed above, lies very close to the borderline of what can justifiably be called meaningfully oriented action, and indeed often on the other side. For it is very often a matter of almost automatic reaction to habitual stimuli which guide behavior in a course which has been repeatedly followed. The great bulk of all everyday action to which people have become habitually accustomed approaches this type.
> 2. . . . Rational orientation to an absolute value (wertrational) . . .
> 3. In terms of affectual orientation, especially emotional, determined by the specific affects and states of feeling of the actor . . .
> 4. . . . Rational orientation to a system of discrete individual ends (zweckrational) . . . Action (that) is rationally oriented to a system of individual ends when the end, the means, and the secondary results are all rationally taken into account and weighed. This involves rational consideration of alternative means to the end, of the relations of the end to other prospective results of employment of any given means, and finally of the relative importance of different possible ends.
> (1947:115-116)

Of the four modes, numbers one and four are explained above because they are of particular interest since they develop the idea of the objective and subjective components of any situation. Weber himself says that action oriented in only one of these modes would be exceedingly rare.

Talcott Parsons also addresses this dichotomy. He says: "An action system, however, is not characterized solely by the actor's orientations and the modalities of objects significant to the actor; it is also a structured system with analytically independent aspects . . . ." (1967:195)

This distinction corresponds again to the distinction between objective cultural components and subjective, although consensually based, situational components.

Znaniecki even claims that definition of the situation was largely a cultural phenomenon in the same way that a definition of a concept or hypothesis is:

> . . . The definer's selection and evaluation of . . . data, his observation and anticipation of facts, and his judgement of their desirability or undesirability are culturally conditioned . . . . (1963:247)

Thus, although the concept is usually discussed in the area of social psychology, it is equally relevant to cultural considerations.

But exactly what is a "definition of the situation"? How can it be made visible? In a major attempt at a theory of this concept Robert Stebbins says that for an individual a situation is a mental construct of elements from the larger whole.

> This mental construction is partly realized through the process of selective perception; a sensitization to those elements of the environment which are of direct interest to the individual. (1967:149)

Stebbins also explicitly makes the distinction between the objective and subjective. The objective is the immediate social and physiological surroundings, and the subjective consists of:

> . . . those components of the objective situation which are seen by the actor to affect any one of his action orientations and therefore must be given meaning before he can act. (1967:150)

Even a cursory view of the corpus of available literature and research points up that the objective aspects of situations are taken for granted and glossed with terms such as social surroundings, norms, or rules of behavior. The objective world out there exists a priori for the actor to perceive selectively but in and of itself is given no explicit sociological form. For example, in a study of definition of the situation in postparental marriages Irvin Deutscher poses questions to his informants concerning the quality of their lives. He uses definition of the situation to mean the subjective evaluation of one's status or life situation. The concept itself is given no added theoretical substance and neither is the way that definitions interact with the actual objective world. In the same way, the research on the formation of, and change in, self-concept for the most part shows only that self-concept does change as a consequence of new situational definitions. This research, closely related to definition of the situation, leaves uninvestigated the question of how such self-concepts or definitions alter (see M. Manis, 1955; Reeder, 1960; Shervood, 1965; Borgatta, 1960; Abu-Laban, 1963; Miyamoto, 1956). This latter question is of considerably more theoretical interest.

It is in the germinal work in symbolic interaction done by G. H. Mead and its application to definition by Peter McHugh that the concept is given theoretical substance. They

introduce concern with time. The placement of events in time becomes the mechanism through which differential perceptions are in part explainable. Thus, McHugh says: ". . . Let me suggest that a definition is possible only when physical space and chronological time are transferred into social space and social time." (1968:3) This transformation of time into social time is clearly treated by Mead in the concept of emergence:

> I have defined emergence as the presence of things in two or more different systems in such a fashion that its presence in the later system changes its character in the earlier system to which it belongs. (Mead, 1932:69)

In other words our pasts are informed by our presents and our projected futures as our presents are informed by our pasts and futures. Thus, the concept of definition has moved from merely a tool to explain individual perceptions of their life circumstances to a concept with its own existence, its own rules, its own logic of production.

If, then, the construction of a situational definition is a temporal process by which an objective reality is restructured in the light of its emergent properties, the task of research appears to be twofold. First, the task is to view the individual actor in terms of the means he uses to organize data into a structured definition. And second, the task is to view the definition of the situation as it is influenced by cultural definitions. A start in this first direction has been made by McHugh:

> I am asking here whether the definition of the situation can be described, not by going outside of itself--not by calling it determined by constitutive rules or socialization, or social structure--but according to its own motif. What sort of logic does it represent, not how is it caused? What are its internal relations; not what effect does it have? (1968:18-19)

The specific motif that definition of the situation has is examined below.

As indicated, the second focus for research, one largely ignored in the literature, deals with the role of the objective or cultural sphere as it bears on definitions. McHugh, although not addressing the question in his research, does concisely state the problem:

> We need only look around us to see people acting in concert; they apparently come to adopt compatible definitions of their situations, the principle of variable meaning notwithstanding. By the same token, however, we also see people acting differently in similar situations. Why? Society, it is said, provides a baseline of interpretation for its members. (1968:8)

McHugh further asserts that it is via rules, the baseline, that a society and individual definitions of the situation come to co-exist. (1968:11)

This, then, is the point of departure for the present research and McHugh has already posed the problem: "In what sense do rules 'determine' definition?" (1968:13) But before any attempt is made to link rules with the subjective definition, we must discuss the nature of rules and their role as baselines or background for concerted activity.

From the subjective standpoint of the actor we see the definition of the situation as an historical and biographical process, each individual interpreting his position by viewing it in the light of his past experience and his projection of future consequences. As Znaniecki points out, one's definition of any situation is concretely inseparable from one's goals for that situation. (1963:243)

Cultural Concerns Within Situational Definition

Until now it has almost been taken for granted that the prototypical actor enters into each situation as a definer, a conscious manipulator of his realm. This assumption, though, is not entirely tenable. Znaniecki makes a most ingenious point when he observes:

> The common aspect of these definitions is that they all require reflection as an ideational activity which may or may not be connected with realistic activities. People can act without defining situations, and they can define situations without acting. (1963:243)

The crucial element here is that one can act without defining the situation. This is only explainable with reference to cultural rules. For each "ordinary" situation the rules of behavior and the alternatives available for action are specified by the culture and internalized by all competent actors. These rules of conduct are, in Harold Garfinkel's terms, the "socially-sanctioned-facts-of-life-in-society-that-any-bona-fide-member-of-society-knows." (1967:76) In other words the courses of action open to the

actor in familiar situations are taken for granted; they are culturally defined but not always individually defined in the situation. And, in the words of Gustav Ichheiser:

> Nothing evades our attention so persistently as that which is taken for granted . . . . As a rule, we notice in an explicit fashion only those features of our total experience which strike our attention by the very fact of not being obvious. (1949:1)

To return now to the original point; the actor in not actively defining his situation is following "taken for granted" cultural definitions and rules that govern them as a matter of course. On the other hand, when actively engaged in constructing a definition, the actor must, on some level of awareness, become cognizant of these rules as guidelines for constructing definitions. And, although these definitions may not be the same as those of his fellow actors, they are nevertheless comprehensible as coherent action strategies by them. If his definition does not adhere to taken for granted rules, his definition and resulting action is subject to dismissal as "irrational," they do not follow the calculus of the symbolic system that guides any social grouping. One could say that an actor making this error has perhaps made an error in grammar. Thus, Max Weber says:

> The term 'social relationship' will be used to denote the behavior of a plurality of actors in so far as, in its meaningful content, the action of each takes account of that of the others and is oriented in these terms. The social relationship thus consists entirely and exclusively in the

> existence of a probability that there will be, in some meaningfully understandable sense a course of social action. (1947:107)

For example, in American society conversation between competent adults not romantically or familiarly involved takes place with the parties separated by a culturally pre-established physical space. In fact, one can say that in American society a basic rule involved in successfully executing a conversation revolves around the spatial distance between the participants. In an experiment conducted by Harold Garfinkel in which his students were ". . . instructed . . . in the course of ordinary conversation and without indicating that anything unusual was happening, to bring their faces up to the subjects . . ." the rule was illustrated. (1967:72) The results of this experiment were consistent communication breakdowns between student experimenters and subjects. If the experimenter had explained to the subject that he or she was hard of hearing, then the conversations might have continued. The breach of the distance rule for conversation would have been no breach at all but would have been defined by a conversant (the experimenter) as a situation adhering to the rules governing behavior in situations involving the deaf. The experimenter is thus forgiven. He was not defining the situation inappropriately, as it were, but rather in terms of a different, yet acceptable, set of rules.

It would appear, therefore, that any study of the definition of the situation is incomplete without reference to an elemental study of the cultural alternatives available to the actors, i.e., the rules.

Cultural Baseline Rules of Interaction that Affect Cultural Continuity

It is essential to distinguish between two types of rules of interaction. These rules can be either situated or non-situated. Certain rules or rule systems are not tied to any specific situation but are broad based trans-situational rules. These are non-situated. They occur as elements in all situated activity. Peter McHugh's specification of the rules governing the methodology for construction of a subjective definition of the situation is a prime example, as are Harold Garfinkel's "constitutive expectancies."[1]

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[1]In the context of games, Harold Garfinkel (1963:190) discusses three basic rules that he argues are basic to any game: "If the rules of any given game, e.g., baseball, chess, or any other described in a book of games, are examined, one set of rules of that game can be discriminated from all the others by the fact that they exhibit the following three properties:
1. From the standpoint of a player, out of alternative territories of play, numbers of players, sequences of moves, and the like, they frame a set that the player expects to choose regardless of his desires, circumstances, plans, interests or consequences of choice either to himself or to others.
2. The player expects that the same set of required alternatives are binding upon the other player as are binding upon him.
3. The player expects that, as he expects the above of the other person, the other person expects it of him.

Cicourel discusses these non-situated rules under the rubric of "basic rules":

> The actor must be endowed with mechanisms or basic rules that permit him to identify settings that would lead to 'appropriate' invocation of norms, where the norms would be surface rules and not basic to how the actor makes inferences about taking or making roles. The basic rules or interpretive procedures are like deep structural grammatical rules; they enable the actor to generate appropriate (usually innovative) responses in changing situated settings. (1970:24)

These types of rules apply in all social situations and are to be considered as background rules for situations. Their use is automatic, and they are background in that they form the baseline on which specific situations are built.

More concretely, McHugh posited that in order for an actor to form a definition of the situation he has to make use of the following elements: theme, elaboration, fit, authorship, revelation, typicality, likelihood, causal texture, technical efficiency, moral requiredness, and substantive congruence.[2] These elements are found in any

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Call these three properties constitutive expectancies." Although Garfinkel will not commit himself to applying these underlying non-situated rules to everyday life, it is likely that they do apply.

[2]The description McHugh (1968:37-44) gives to the elements making up a definition of the situation are as follows. Theme: "Actors assume before the fact that a pattern of meaning will be discovered in the events they observe. They are future oriented in that they take it for granted they will be able to make something of what is yet to occur." Elaboration: "Once discovered theme has its occasions. It is compounded and elaborated by locating

situation, regardless of its content, wherein the actor is called upon to make sense of, to define, the situation. These same elements are latent in the actor and therefore, in and of themselves, (i.e., isolated and apart from the conditions of their use) are rules of which he is ordinarily unaware. These, then, are non-situated rules of interaction; they are rules of situations. But, as has been pointed out (Imershein, 1974), the question of exactly how basic non-situated rules or interpretive procedures enable the actor to establish a baseline applicable cross situationally is not answered by theorists.

On the other hand, situated rules, the research concern

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its particulars over a series of chronologically discrete events." Fit: "Instances do not always correspond neatly to theme or to one another." Authorship: "There is a positive search for patterns, one that takes work and results in change." Revelation: "Some referents incapable of standing alone come to be understood only in terms of some other social meaning, that is they are syncategorematic." Typicality: "When a member interacts with another, he infers whether or not the other's behavior is representative of some group or category membership." Likelihood: "Members assess the probability of behavior, just as they do its typicality." Causal Texture: "Members point to some phenomena as the conditions under which still other things will occur. The causal texture when a man cries, for example, may include drunkenness or bereavement." Technical Efficiency: "Members assert that some means are more efficient than others in achieving desired ends. They characterize behavior as appropriate or inappropriate, depending upon how it facilitates an objective." Moral Requiredness: "Members assert the ontological necessity of some behavior independent of personal circumstance or desire." Substantive Congruency: "Members determine whether others' substantive assessment of their environments are empirically right or wrong."

here, are rules of the game, they are rules in situations that guide specific behavior. These situated rules, in part, give any event its characteristic quality and allow the actor to see the event as "familiar" and as part of a "known in common" world.

Harold Garfinkel asserts that any event that members hold in common, e.g., auctions, bookkeeping, apartment house living, belongs to what he calls the "commonsense environment." (1963:214) Garfinkel goes on to identify eleven non-situated features that any "event in the commonsense environment" must have. These features define its commonsense character as "actual events in a real and common world."[3]

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[3]Garfinkel says: "Whatever an event may specifically consist of, whether its determinations are those of persons' motives, their life histories, distributions of income in the population, the conditions of advancement on the job, kinship obligations, the organization of an industry, the layout of a city, what ghosts do when night falls, and the thought that God thinks, if and only if the event has for the witness the following additional determinations, is it an event in the commonsense environment.
1. The determinations assigned to the event by the user are, from his point of view, assignments that he is required to make; the other person is required to make the same assignments; and just as the user requires the same assignments to hold for the other persons, he assumes that the other person requires the same of him.
2. From the user's point of view, a relationship of undoubted correspondence is the sanctioned relationship between the-presented-appearance-of-the-intended-object and the-intended-object-that-appears-in-this-presented-appearance.
3. From the user's point of view, the event that is known, in the manner that it is known, can actually and potentially affect the knower's actions and circumstances and can be

We propose that particular sets of situated rules are guides for behavior in specific types of situations with each type of event having its own set of situated rules. If this is so, then these rules should exhibit Garfinkel's eleven features, for they would be the situated baseline of any commonplace event (read "commonsense environment").

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affected by his actions and circumstances.
4. From the user's point of view, the meanings of events are the products of a standardized process of naming, reification, and idealization of the user's stream of experiences, i.e., the products of the same language.
5. From the user's point of view, the present determinations of the events, whatever these may be, are determinations that were intended on previous occasions and that may be again intended in identical fashion on an indefinite number of future occasions.
6. From the user's point of view, the intended event is retained as the temporally identical event throughout the stream of experience.
7. From the user's point of view, the event has as its contexts of interpretation: (a) a commonly entertained scheme of communication consisting of a standardized system of signals and coding rules, and (b) 'what anyone knows,' i.e., a pre-established corpus of socially warranted knowledge.
8. From the user's point of view, the actual determination that the event exhibits for him are the potential determinations that it would exhibit for the other person were they to exchange positions.
9. From the user's point of view, to each event there corresponds its determinations that originate in the user's and in the other person's particular biography. From the user's point of view, such determinations are irrelevant for the purposes at hand of either, and from the user's point of view both have selected and interpreted the actual and potential determinations of the event in an empirically identical manner that is sufficient for all their practical purposes.
10. From the user's point of view, there is a characteristic disparity between the publicly acknowledged determinations and the personal withheld determinations of events, with this private knowledge held in reserve. From the user's point of view, the event means for both the user and the other more than the user can say.
11. From the user's point of view, alterations of this characteristic disparity remain within his own autonomous control." (Note especially numbers 1, 3, 5, 10, 11.)

Thus, any event that is seen as "common" is governed by situated rules; situated rules in turn are governed by the broader based non-situated rules (see Figure One).

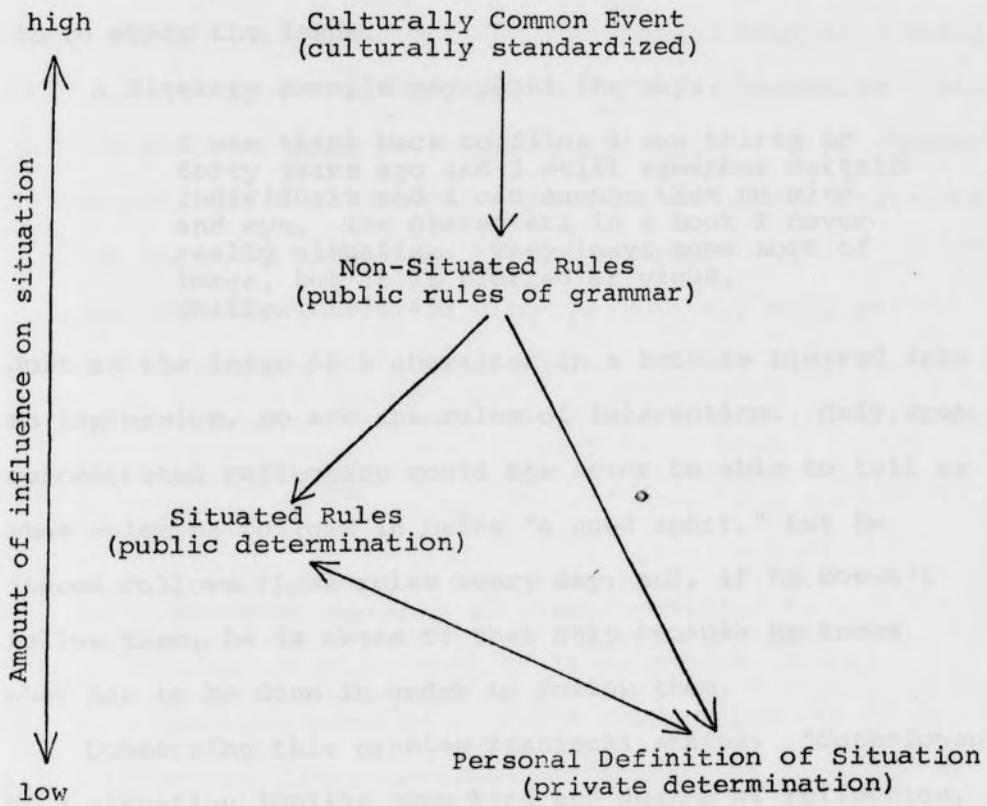
Both types of rules evidence what Merton (1949) calls latent functions and in that sense are to some degree usually devoid of conscious meaning for the actor. Garfinkel refers to his eleven features as "seen without being noticed features of socially structured environments." (1963:216) He goes on to say that "the more the setting is institutionally regulated and routinized, the more does the user take for granted their feature (sic) 'known in common with others.'" (1963:216)

The point has just been made that both types of rules are latent and in part frequently devoid of the awareness of meaningful content. This idea is analogous to Erving Goffman's concept of the "negatively eventful" act. (1963:7) This type of act gives rise to negative sanction if not performed but, if performed, passes unnoticed as an event. Thus, if situated or non-situated rules are not broken they remain unnoticed background features for actors. Methods for observing situated rules will be discussed in Chapter Two.

At this point an analytic distinction must be made between the concept of rules and that of method. Through this distinction the latent nature of situated and non-situated rules will become more apparent. As previously observed persons are not readily aware of either type of rule.

FIGURE 1

THE COMMONSENSE ENVIRONMENT



If, indeed, they are not aware of such rules, what, then, are they following to enable them to act credibly as in-the-know actors in any given situation? To say that they "take the role of the other" or engage in a process of "fitting together of individual lines of action" (Blumer, 1969:82) is to evade the issue.

A literary example may point the way:

> I can think back to films I saw thirty or forty years ago and I still remember certain individuals and I can summon them to mind and eye. The characters in a book I never really visualize. They leave some sort of image, but it is blurred or vague. (Miller, 1971:45)

Just as the image of a character in a book is blurred into an impression, so are the rules of interaction. Only upon concentrated reflection would the actor be able to tell us what rules he follows in being "a good sport," but he indeed follows these rules every day, and, if he doesn't follow them, he is aware of that only because he knows what has to be done in order to follow them.

Concerning this problem Znaniecki states: "Consciousness of a situation implies some kind and degree of reflection, i.e., deliberate thinking." According to him, the "agent" does "practical thinking" about the values (rules) he is utilizing but does not separate this thinking about values from their utilization. Thinking becomes deliberate only when the ". . . Agent consciously postpones, interrupts, or stops the realization of his purpose in order to reflect

about the practical problems he is facing . . . ." (1963:242)

This leads to the following distinction. The actor follows what will be called a method. It is an impression or gestalt of elements. The elements are the rules themselves. The word, method, is arbitrary and course-of-action might well be more appropriate. Method, or course-of-action, refers to the actor's choice of an action alternative. Thus, in an auction setting the method might be to bid or perhaps to refrain from bidding, but underlying each course-of-action are the rules of bidding or of not bidding.

Our primary concern is with collectively held rules, institutions. Robert Stebbins epitomizes how they tie in with situational definitions. In discussing the modes that definitions of situations may take he cites cultural definitions:

> . . . Collective representations are the standard meanings of events embedded in the community culture as a whole or some sub-part of it that we learn either through primary socialization or secondary socialization or both. A given cultural definition is consensually shared to the extent that those who are members of a particular group are aware that others in it recognize and utilize that definition in the same way that they do. Thus, in North America people drink alcoholic beverages and talk socially with others, and offices at places of work are typically conceived as locations for occupationally related activity--two widely held cultural definitions. (1962:194-195)

But why does Stebbins conclude his exposition of the cultural definition mode with reference only to culturally held

description? This merely scratches the surface of how the bar or office is culturally defined. The cultural rules of usage in the bar or office are equally if not more important in situational definitions made by actors, significantly, that such rules of usage are subject to possible manipulation, for example, the person attempting to evade the draft may feign insanity by manipulating the rules of corrent communication. These rules are subject also to elaboration by actors. Lindsey Churchill gives a fine example of elaboration in his discussion of Garfinkel's et cetera property.

> For example, given the sign 'No Smoking' on an auditorium wall, there is an invisible 'etc.' written following it that normally competent members of the culture know. For them the sign really reads 'No Smoking, etc.' Thus, no one in the audience will try to sanction a magician who, in the course of a performance, lights and smokes a cigarette while on stage. And if someone did try to sanction the magician, he is the one who would be regarded as wrong by the other audience members, not the magician. They would say, in effect, that the sanctioner did not know how to use the norm. (1971:184)

Another example is illuminating. The boxer is subject to the rules of fair play (rules that probably fall into both a situated and non-situated category). His impression of these rules would be the "method" of fighting fair, i.e., don't hit below the belt, no punches to the kidney. But what of the situation where one fighter fights foul and conceals this from the referee? If this goes on, the fair

fighter is lost, especially if he can't prove foul play. But, he may retaliate by also fighting foul and concealing it from the referee; in fact, he may do this until the other fighter learns his lesson and returns to the original "fair play" rules. The fair fighter has done nothing wrong; he has merely used available elaborations of fair play rules. One need only look to the use of "fair play" in professional wrestling to see how the "good guy" is allowed to fight foul and yet still retain his reputation as a fair fighter.

To the conscious smoker, boxer, or wrestler the situation is "No Smoking" or "fight fair." The rules that go into these situated actions, though below the surface, are constantly being unwittingly or wittingly called into action to aid in elaborating, defining, the situation.

To understand fully how actors construct situational definitions the following elements should be taken into account: actor's subjective accounts of the situation, the non-situated rules of definitional construction (McHugh, 1968), and also the situated rules. These latter should be specified and examined for how they contribute to group and individual definitions of the situation.

In positing the existence of both situated and non-situated baseline rules we posit the existence of underlying cultural patterns that give each situation its basic character. It is the actor's interpretation of this baseline

that allows for the emergent situational definition. It is the use and elaboration of these underlying rules that allows for both continuity and for divergence from one incidence of a situation to another. It will be convenient later in this paper to refer to the actor's actions based on subjective interpretations of situated rules as strategies and tactics. Strategies will be seen as the actor's overall plans or patterns governing how rules are to be used. Tactics, on the other hand, will be viewed as usage or elaboration of particular rules.

In the present research context all auctions are basically identical, but they still have emergent differences from one auction to another. It is not our purpose to examine individual auctions for their divergencies but rather for their pattern of situated rules, and the elaborations attached to those rules.

This research proposes that, regardless of the meaning that actors attach to their definitions, in any "ordinary," that is, culturally common and stipulated situation, bona fide actors create and are informed by situated rules. Further they act out their personal subjective definitions in terms of those rules, the elaborations attached to those rules, and the rules governing other actors in the situation. Thus, definitions are constructed in a situated context and cannot be understood without reference to situated cultural rules and the actor's methods of dealing with them and with other actors.

The Problem

The thrust of this research is twofold. Firstly, as has been indicated earlier, within the literature on definition of the situation consensus exists that any situational definition has two components: the subjective component and the objective cultural component.[4] However, as has been also pointed out, only the subjective components have been adequately treated as a topic for research. The present investigation, then, attempts to fill the gap in situational research, by studying several aspects of the objective cultural component in definitions of the situation. Specifically, the country auction will be examined with the object of identifying two elements: the objective situated cultural rules that members take into consideration when constructing lines of action appropriate to culturally standardized situations and the process and manner in which situated cultural rules affect and are affected by subjective situational definitions. In this second context, the following research questions are posed. Can it be said that the actor's constructions of strategies and tactics for action are informed by situated rules? Further,

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[4]In relation to this T. M. Newcomb (1950:94) says "The term 'frame of reference' is commonly used to indicate the kind of ground which actually influences the way in which perception is structured. In its broadest sense, the term includes all the factors, objective and subjective, which are brought to bear upon the way in which the figure is perceived."

does the acceptability of an overall action strategy or a particular tactic depend for participating actors on whether it is in accordance with the situated rules and their accompanying elaborations?[5]

Secondly, this research will attempt to provide further evidence in answer to the question of how situations are maintainable over time. To facilitate this it is proposed that via culturally situated rules divergent subjective definitions maintain a certain consistency that allows an overall situation, with numerous defining actors as participants, to assume a predictable character. Thus, the actor need only mention a party, an auction, a school for fellow actors to be able to construct a definition that, although fraught with individual meaning, is still recognizable to all.

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[5]Acceptability here means simply that an action does not interrupt the "normal" flow of the situation. Acceptability also implies that an actor's actions in no way serve to discredit him as either an in-the-know actor or as an "honest" man.

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The Research Problem Restated

As has been indicated, there is good reason to assert that traditional sociological attempts at explaining cultural continuity with categorical concepts such as culture, norms, mores, or folkways are not adequate. This research has proposed dealing with the problematic nature of cultural continuity analytically by positing the existence of situated baseline rules of interaction. The literature gives ample argument in favor of research in this direction (McHugh, 1968; Garfinkel, 1963; Cicourel, 1970; Cavan, 1966; Churchill, 1971; Douglas, 1971). It has been asserted that the use and elaboration of situated rules, rules that provide the continuity from like situation to like situation, take place both in an individual's objective, culturally determined, situational definition and in his personal, culturally conditioned, subjective definition of the situation.

This research, therefore, has proposed the investigation of several orienting questions. First, assuming the existence of a situated baseline for interaction, what, in a given situation are the situated rules like? Can situated rules of interaction be brought to view, made visible, in a given

situation so as to reveal the particular character of that situation? In other words, as was indicated earlier, can an event's characteristic elements that enable in-the-know actors to see an event as "familiar" and as part of the "known in common" world be identified? Second, as has been stated in Chapter One, situated rules form the elements of, and usage guidelines for, objective culturally standardized definitions. Can it be said that individual selection and use of accompanying elaborations on these rules transforms objective traditionally defined behavior into a combination of traditional behavior and zweckrational behavior? (Weber, 1961) Thus, a subjective definition of the situation, in the usually accepted sense of the term, (Thomas, 1928; Parsons, 1951; Znaniecki, 1963; Stebbins, 1967; Waller, 1970) would be seen to be built on the individuals particular usage of traditional cultural definitions for a particular situation. If this is so, cultural continuity between like cultural situations would be preserved. All differing subjective definitions would then be anchored in one set of situated cultural rules and their accompanying elaborations.

Third, as stated earlier, if an actor does not adhere to certain rules of and in situations, the situation may either collapse or the actor might possibly be faced with discreditation as an in-the-know actor, or worse. For example, Garfinkel showed how a breach of the non-situated rule governing distance between parties to a conversation

caused situational disruption. Can it be said, therefore, that any subjective definition is valid only insofar as it adheres to the culturally stipulated rules of usage and the alternative elaborations attached to those rules? (For a discussion of elaborative techniques see Churchill, 1971.)

In addressing these questions we hope not only to identify the characteristic and essential elements of a situation but also to show that the individual choice and use of a personal definition of the situation is not a random affair, but one strictly regulated and provided for in the objective situation itself. Furthermore, if such a subjective definition exceeds the cultural guidelines, it is rejected by participants.

Research Settings: Their Choice and Observation

In choosing a situation for investigating the above research questions several guidelines were established. The situation had to be: (1) Sufficiently standardized culturally to enable the researcher to attribute to it, a priori, the character of situations usually typed as ongoing social products utilizing social rules of competence. Such situations as "greetings," "telephone conversations," "automobile driving," or "going to the movies" would be examples of such standardized activity situations. (2) Circumscribed, both spatially and temporally, so as to allow numerous occasions for observation of the situation from

beginning to end. (3) Sufficiently ambiguous to participants so as to permit them to use the elaborations accompanying situated rules in their attempts to dispel confusion and ambiguity. These attempts at defining or rationalizing the situation had to be evidenced in action and not just in thought so as to be empirically observable.

Research was undertaken in two settings. First, "country auctions" were studied in and around Greensboro, North Carolina. Second, observations and interviews were conducted at a school for auctioneers in Kansas City, Missouri.

The North Carolina Auction Observations

Over a period of fifteen months approximately 35 auctions were attended in the area of Greensboro, North Carolina. Generally, an auction was selected each week from those listed in the "Auction" section of the local classified ads, but occasionally an auction was discovered via a hand bill distributed at a previous auction. Usually only one auction per week could be attended since they occurred at the same time: Saturday mornings at 10:00 a.m. Exceptions to this schedule were a local auction house that held auctions every Friday night and another house holding auctions on Saturday nights.[1]

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[1]For a discussion of the auction barn situation as a special case of the country auction see Chapter Three.

After a period of time for sensitization to the auction scene several selection criteria evolved. First, an attempt was made to select for observation as many different auctioneers as were working in the geographical vicinity. In toto approximately fifteen different auctioneers were observed. Second, auctions were selected on the basis of the types of goods being sold. Thus, a variety of types of sales, all under the rubric of "country auctions," were attended. Third, certain sales were selected out of a personal interest on the part of the researcher in particular items to be sold.

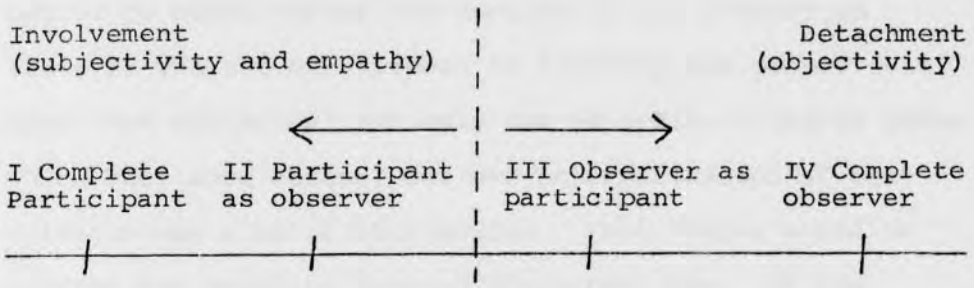
Method of Study. - - The North Carolina auction was viewed using two distinct methodological procedures. Both approaches fall under what has been called a "qualitative methodology."

> Qualitative methodology refers to those research strategies, such as participant observation, in-depth interviewing, total participation in the activity being investigated, field work, etc., which allow the researcher to obtain first hand knowledge about the empirical social world in question. (Filstead, 1970:6)

The first approach or, better, series of approaches was of participant observation using various degrees of involvement and objectivity. It is helpful here to follow Buford Junker's scheme of theoretical roles for field work. (1960:46)

FIGURE 2

THEORETICAL ROLES FOR FIELD WORK



In terms of this research three of Junker's four possible roles were used at one time or another, specifically numbers II, III, and IV. These three roles will be discussed in order. Role number II, participant as observer, was most in evidence when the writer found himself actively participating in the auction usually with the hope of obtaining an item he truly wanted. Although this role was peripheral to the research as a whole it did serve as a sensitizing device, allowing the researcher to lose himself in a role actively used by participants. As a participant, either in bidding, buying, or refraining from bidding, the researcher was actively subject to all the rules governing the auction situation and was forced, if participation was desired, actively to produce the required and appropriate behaviors. Thus, by becoming a "real" person in the auction situation the researcher was forced to internalize all knowledge that any "real" person needed to know in order to function as an in-the-know actor. Such internalization was both ideal and

deleterious at one and the same time. It was ideal in that, for this research, the writer had all the information needed to characterize the auction at his fingertips. Since it was not our purpose to identify how people felt about the situation, but only the objective criteria under which they were acting, our own internalization of that criteria was a valid data source. That source could be checked for validity through its actual use. If the researcher could function creditably and without notice in the situation, he must indeed be acting in accordance with the rules. The negative side to this approach, though, lies in the fact that once the activity becomes "habit," as it did for the researcher, it becomes less available to conscious recovery. The newly acquired knowledge becomes, as for any actor, a fact to be taken for granted. Because of this problem role II was not relied upon as the sole source of data.

Role number III, observer as participant, was indicated in two situations. First, the observer, in trying to verify observations, would actively use the tactics and ploys observed to be used by "true" participants. Thus, in contrast to the techniques employed above, the researcher sought out bidding techniques observed in other bidders and employed them in his own bidding. This served as a test of the observer's grasp of actors' typical usages through actual use. This was an active process involving constant reflection

and contrivance. The researcher was in this case an observer first and a participant second. This method served to broaden and check the data available. Whereas in role II the observer became a participant with a single bidding style, in this role the observer was able to test many styles to understand better why one and not another was chosen by participants in a given situation. Second, the researcher attempted to test certain "what if" propositions. The use of the "what if" proposition can be understood in the following way. Not all conceivable possibilities occurred at every auction. Certain bidder actions were conceivable to this researcher but never happened. Some of these were tested during the auction to see if there were action contingencies on the part of the auctioneer for dealing with such eventualities. Thus, this researcher might tender a bid that was out of context to see what would happen if that were done.

Role IV, the complete observer, was by far the most common. The complete observer role can be included under the umbrella of participant observer in this case since as will be pointed out in Chapter Three, the observer is an actual and everpresent role at the auction. In this role the researcher was able to detail what went on at the auction and to become aware of the various action possibilities and strategies. Through this procedure the objective description related in Chapter Three was compiled. More

importantly though, material not recoverable due to the researcher's internalization while in role number II could be attacked from another direction.

None of these roles were enacted as an isolated occurrence. The researcher found himself jumping in and out of them as the situation dictated. Thus, if while participating in a bidding sequence the actions of another bidder became more interesting, participation by the researcher was suspended in favor of complete observation.

Finally, it should be noted that in all three roles the researcher observed unobtrusively. At no time was it revealed to "true" participants that the researcher was anything but what he appeared to be, a participant.

The second approach used was one that is generally categorized as an unobtrusive measure (see Webb, et al:1966).

> Unobtrusive measures of social phenomena are methods of observation which directly remove the observer from the behavior interaction, or events being studied. Such techniques as hidden observation (involving not only hidden investigators but also hidden recording devices and photographic equipment as well) . . . . (Phillips, 1971:125)

In this case tape recordings were made of twelve auctions for use in later analysis.

The Auction School Observation

The second phase of this research was conducted in Kansas City, Missouri at the Missouri Auction School

(MAS).[2] The school conducts a two week vocational training course for would be auctioneers four times a year. The researcher attended the two week session given from January 28 to February 8, 1974. Having observed the auction and having become sensitized to its workings from the perspective of a crowd member, the observer gained from the auction school an opportunity to reach a similar level of awareness from the auctioneer's perspective.

The school was founded in 1905 in Trenton, Missouri. In 1911 it moved to Kansas City but was forced to cease operations at the start of the war. Following the war the school was reopened by several of its former instructors. In 1959 it was bought by its present owner. The School is presently located in what is called the Livestock Exchange Building adjacent to the Kansas City Stock Yards and the Livestock Auction Market.

The school functions as a training center for prospective auctioneers, and, although not the only school of its kind in the country, it is one of the largest.

In their advertising brochure the prospective student reads that:

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[2]The circumstances surrounding the choice of the Missouri Auction School as the one to be observed are rather involved. Suffice it to say that the school was chosen not purposefully but accidentally. As it turned out this particular school is one of the best in the country and a good choice for observation.

> YOU CAN BE AN AUCTIONEER . . . . If you have the will, we have the know-how to make you a leader in the auctioneering profession. We ask only $200 tuition and two weeks of your time. OTHERS ARE DOING IT . . . . YOU CAN TOO!

The particular session observed was attended by seventy-eight students from all over the United States predominantly from the Middle Western United States. The students at this session were all male, although in previous years women have registered for the course. Student ages ranged considerably (see Table 1). The youngest student present was nineteen and the oldest, fifty-eight.

TABLE 1

MAS STUDENT AGES

Age	No. Observed Values
20 years and under	8
21 to 30 years	23
31 to 40 years	23
41 to 50 years	13
51 years and over	11
	N = 78

Students were asked to report their present occupation at the time of attendance at the school (see Table 2). Of the seventy-eight students nine derived at least part of their income from the auction business.

The course itself was taught by professional working auctioneers. Of the eleven persons who worked at one time or another in an instructor's capacity during the session, four worked full time, two worked part time, and five auctioneers lectured or spoke to the class at one time or

another. In addition to these eleven persons several auctioneers at the Kansas City Livestock Market were available to answer questions if sought out by students.

TABLE 2

PRESENT OCCUPATION OF MAS STUDENTS*

Occupation	No. Observed Values
Farmers and ranchers	13
Sales (other than auction)	16
Auction connected work	4
Real Estate	9
Cattle dealers	3
Students	2
Other	29
No answer	2
	N = 78

*As most students had several occupations only the first or primary occupation was registered.

Method of Study. - - In contrast to the methods used in connection with the North Carolina auctions, at the Missouri Auction School the researcher assumed the role of the known observer.

> In becoming a known observer, one enjoys the enormous advantage of being able to move about, observe, and ask questions unrestricted by the duties and socially defined constrictions of an extant role in the setting. (Lofland, 1971:95)

In this role the researcher was able to attend any instruction or drill session at any time (see Appendix for an example of a daily schedule) and to interview participants at will. Nine non-structured interviews lasting from fifty to ninety minutes were conducted with teacher auctioneers.

In this sequence of interviews, interviewees were chosen almost exclusively on the basis of availability. Of the eleven possible teacher interviews the nine conducted were as close as practicable to the entire teacher population. Throughout the two week period informal talks were held with student auctioneers over breakfast or lunch or between class sessions. Friendships were established with several students. These friendships led to more willingness of other students to talk with the researcher. It should not be assumed, though, that this method was completely successful. Only a fraction of the student body was interviewed even informally, and many students looked at the observer with suspicion and distrust. This distrust was manifested also by at least one instructor who was convinced that the researcher was attempting to steal the course and use it to establish his own auction school. Only the following can be said concerning how students were chosen for informal interview sessions. No objective method was employed to choose informants. Whether a student became an informant was based on the following: a student might approach the researcher out of curiosity, the researcher would join student at the lunch table; or the researcher would approach a student on the bus to and from the school and strike up a conversation lasting the length of the fifteen minute trip. Finally, approximately twenty hours of tape recordings were made of instruction and drill sessions. Although it has been argued that the introduction

of recording devices by a researcher (Cicourel, 1964) inhibits the normal course of events, this was not thought to be the case in this situation. Students were issued their own recorders upon request by the school and were free to record any session they wished for future reference. The introduction of this researcher's recorder was, therefore, not a blatant imposition of the interaction and successfully blended in with the normal course of events.

It should be also noted that the school itself provided written and recorded educational and advertising material that was useful to the researcher in later analysis.

Concepts and Their Specification Within the Settings

The several research problems that were stated earlier in this Chapter can be broken down into their component concepts. These concepts, in turn, can then be specified in terms of the research settings.

Definition of the Situation

Objective Definition. - - For the purposes of this analysis the objective or culturally determined definitions of the situations are, analytically, equivalent to the various culturally defined and available roles and the culturally specified interrelations between those roles in the auction

situation. In Weber's terminology one type of behavior guided by objective definitions is "strictly traditional behavior . . ." (1961:1064)

On the most abstract level such traditional behavior was conceived of in terms of an ideal typical approach.

> An ideal type is formed by the one-sided accentuation of one or more points of view and by the synthesis of a great many diffuse, discrete, more or less present and occasionally absent concrete individual phenomena, which are arranged according to those one-sidedly emphasized viewpoints into a unified analytical construct (Gedankenbild). (Weber, 1949:90)

Although this research does utilize, to some extent, an ideal type methodology it should not be inferred that the construction of an ideal type auction is being attempted.

Concretely, objective culturally defined and appropriate definitions are inferred from behavior that necessarily repeat themselves over and over without variation in the setting. Thus, in the North Carolina auction situation, behavior observed to repeat itself regardless of the exigencies of particular problematic occurrences was seen as objective behavior governed by objective situational definitions.

In the MAS setting, objective definitions were specified as those skills and attitudes observed to be required by teachers of prospective auctioneers and meant for use in every auction situation regardless of its specific content. Thus, although an auctioneer may have specific strategies

and tactics for dealing with a particular bidder or bidding situation, he nevertheless maintains the situation as a recognizable auction by not deviating from its culturally defined and objectivized character.

In the strictest sense the objective definitions of any situation can be specified as the idealized collection of situated rules. Indeed, objective definition is posited as equivalent to the sum of the situated rules.

Subjective Definition. - - The personal subjective definitions of the situation are specified as the types of specific usages of the ideal typically constructed objective definitions; how one uses the objective definition in achieving one's ends is one's subjective usage or definition. Although the subjective usage is also culturally defined, the choice of which usage is left up to personal taste, needs or requirements.

Since this research did not attempt investigation of individual subjective situational definitions, their nature remains problematic. But, if, as has been pointed out in the literature (see Znaniecki, 1963; Stebbins, 1967; Weber, 1961), the subjective definition is inseparable from an individual's goals for that situation, then any individual's particular strategy or tactics in a situation can be taken as reflecting or pointing to his underlying subjective definition.

Keeping the above in mind, the concept of subjective definition was identified in the North Carolina auction setting as the ways in which the bidder or auctioneer used culturally defined action guidelines for their respective roles. In other words, how the rules governing objective definitions were applied to personal goals.

In the MAS setting auctioneers' subjective definitions were seen in several ways. First, auctioneers' responses to interview questions calling for statements concerning the ways in which particular auction situations were examined. Thus, for example, auctioneers were asked if they had methods they would use to elicit first bids on items, or if their methods of handling the auction changed when only two people were bidding as opposed to three or more people. Second, personal opinions offered informally in the form of stories, comments, or advice were explored. Just as MAS instructors would often relate personal experiences to their students so also students would offer their auction experiences to the group. Both of these types of communication were taken as pointing to the informant's perspective vis-a-vis the auction. Third, lecture material offered (or elicited by student questions) by instructors was often in the form of "in that case" or "if that situation comes up" or "if you run into this" and the like. These examples were seen to provide methods intended to enable a student to deal with situations that

called for ad hoc activity lines, that is, an activity line constructed on the spot. That these kinds of situations, or instructions for dealing with them, might also point to an actor's subjective perception of the situation.

As has been stated, there was no attempt to investigate individual subjective definitions. Indeed, the observations were not sensitive enough to get at these. Rather, the above indicators were used to delineate the points in the auction situation where subjective definition was needed to make the situation clear or to pursue personal goals. Moreover, the above indicators were used to identify the types of subjective definitions that are possible in the auction situation.

Situated Rules

As inferred, situated rules are the elemental components comprising objective situational definitions. Situated rules comprise the various steps required to carry out any culturally recognized role or role behavior successfully. They are necessary in that they contain the essential character, the phenomonological essence of any situation, in this case the auction. Phenomenologically, research designed to examine essentials has been called the "investigating of general essences." (Spiegelberg, 1960) Generally it consists of the following:

> . . . The observer begins to order particular phenomena in his consciousness according to their similarities, and then proceeds to interpret intuitively what constitutes the 'essence' of these phenomena when experienced together. In this stage, the basic question which the phenomenologist asks himself in determining what constitutes essence is: Can a phenomenon remain the same phenomenon without the elements deemed essential by the observer? For example, Spiegelberg states, can a triangle still remain a triangle without three sides and three angles? (Bruyn, 1966:274)

Operationally, then, a situated rule is any stricture governing action without which the situation could not exist as such.

Several methods were employed in identifying and extricating situated rules from the observed situation.

1. Any action seen to exist in all instances of auctions was deemed to be governed by situated rules. Those particular actions were then observed to see how they were constructed by participants, i.e., what combination of smaller acts made up the larger action.

2. Two variations of a technique developed by Harold Garfinkel were employed. Garfinkel's method involved the disruption of socially typical scenes. For example, Garfinkel's students were asked to behave like boarders in their own homes, bargain for items in a store, place their faces only inches away from another when in conversation. It was Garfinkel's hope that by observing what was necessary to break down social interaction, that is to make it problematic for its participants, he

> would be able to infer the constitutive socially sanctioned properties that all members take for granted. (Garfinkel, 1967) McHugh (1968) also utilized this method in a controlled experimental setting in trying to investigate non-situated rules utilized in the construction of situational definitions.

In the researcher's first variation on the above method North Carolina auctions were observed but no "breakdown acts" were artificially introduced. Rather, natural breakdowns, caused by ignorant or troublesome participants were observed producing the same results. Thus, the breaking of rules brought to view the rules necessary to preserve interaction.

The second methodological variation, one adopted at the MAS, is as follows. It is popularly conceded that the educational process is one involving trial and error, one involving the learning of correct behavior through the process of making and correcting mistakes. Indeed, this process is identical to Garfinkel's method in which he attempts to learn the correct rules by finding out what is incorrect. In a learning situation, therefore, rules can be inferred by observing the ways in which the in-the-know actor (the teacher) corrects the incompetent actor's (student) mistakes concerning what any in-the-know actor must know in order to function competently.

Non-Situated Rules

The observation of non-situated rules of interaction was not part of this project. Although such rules are

thought to be in use in the auction situation, the identification and use of them is left to future research.

The Analysis of the Dynamic Relations Between Orienting Questions Numbers Two and Three and the Three Concepts

The analysis of the relationship of situated rules, as manifest in objective definitions of the situation, to subjective situated definitions will proceed in the following manner.

Having identified and set out the situated rules governing the various auction segments, each segment will, in its turn, be analyzed in terms of the actual "everyday" usage of the identified rules. Individual elaborations of the rules will be taken as pointing to an underlying goal or definition of the particular situation the elaboration occured in. Some specification of the degree of latitude allowable in terms of individual deviation from the rule system (the objective definition) will be attempted. The degree of situational continuity present in a situation, or conversely, the degree of disruption, if any, will be taken as an indicator of definitional acceptance or rejection. In the MAS situation, definitional rejection will also be indicated by outright rejection of student actions by teachers. Definitional acceptance by participants will be taken as pointing to a personal definition within the allowable range

of the applicable situated rule. Definitional rejection by participants will be taken as indicating to a personal definition that violates the allowable range of the applicable situated rule. Thus, if a participant noticeably (in the eyes of the observer) embellishes a rule but no obvious negative sanction is applied, it can be assumed that he embellished in a permissible way, a way still within the rules. If, on the other hand, the person is sanctioned for his embellishment, his elaboration, he can be assumed to have gone outside the perimeter of the applicable rules. As has been noted in Chapter One, negative sanctions are defined as any response to improper rule usage. The presence of such sanctions will be identified in several ways. 1. A negative sanction will be said to have occurred if, in response to improper rule usage by an actor, the normal course of events at the auction is interrupted, and the attention of participants is turned toward the violating actor in such a way as to attempt to alter, or actually alter, his behavior. 2. A negative sanction will be said to have occurred if an actor's action gives rise to his discreditation as a competent actor, i.e., if his action is greeted by laughter, derision, or complete ignoral. 3. A negative sanction will be said to have occurred if an actor or actors speak of certain actions in a way that indicates their fear of discreditation if such actions were performed and discovered.

What is of interest here as an indicator of definitional rejection is not the actual overt negative sanction itself, but the notion that such and such activity is liable to negative sanction, and why. In this context only one type of positive sanction exists, that of ongoing situational activity. If an action goes unnoticed, that is, does not cause special negative attention, it has incurred the positive sanction of being admitted to the situation as "proper" activity.

There can be, at least in the present research, no definitive answers to the orienting questions. The methods employed do not permit the establishment of causal relationships beyond those of a hypothetical or speculative nature.

A Methodological Defense

It is now both necessary and appropriate to enter into a brief discussion of qualitative methodology in general, what its limitations and strengths appear to be, and how it serves or inhibits this research study.

In the present context qualitative methodology refers, as was stated earlier, to the various role forms of the participant observation model for research. In his general discussion of this methodology Bruyn offers three characteristics:

> 1. The participant observer shares in the life activities and sentiments of people in face-to-face relationships.
> 2. The participant observer is a normal part of the culture and the life of the people under observation.

> 3. The role of the participant observer reflects the social process which has meaning for people in groups outside the group he studies, since the processes of living in any society are similar for people everywhere. If the researcher reveals insight into the collective symbols of people in one community his conclusions can be understood and have significance for people in other communities . . . (1966:13)

What these points serve to reveal about the methodology utilized in this study is a fundamental assumption concerning the nature of man. The use of observational field techniques assumes that one person will be able to understand another person by adopting, to the best of his ability, the perspective of that other. (Denzin, 1970)

> The discovery of common culture consists of the discovery from within the society by social scientists of the existence of common sense knowledge of social structures. (Garfinkel, 1967:76)

The underlying commitment in the methodology under discussion is one of a fundamental belief that a researcher, or any actor, can, and does, effectively "take the role of the other" for the purpose of discovering, from within, the perspectives of that other. (Bruyn, 1966; Garfinkel, 1967; Denzin, 1970; Lofland, 1971) Indeed, the methodology reveals a commitment, at least on a theoretical level, to the assumptions of the symbolic interactionist perspective.

It is not necessary to reiterate here arguments for the drawbacks of a quantitative methodology (see Filstead, 1970; Lofland, 1971; Bruyn, 1966; Glaser and Strauss, 1965; Schatzman, 1973; Cicourel, 1964; Douglas, 1971, 1970, 1967;

Sjoberg and Nett, 1968; Phillips, 1971; Blumer, 1969). Rather, two major advantages of the present methodology will be cited. First, the social world is observed from within. This enables a more exact match between "true" participant and observer participant meanings. (Vidich, 1970) Second, "observational techniques provide a more intimate view of social behavior and interaction." (Phillips, 1971:136)

But, in defending our research techniques the above generalities are insufficient. Specifically the research methodology utilized was justified, in terms of the desired results, for the following reasons:

1. Reality, as it was conceived in Chapter One, is an emergent phenomenon. The auction situation is not a static entity, but, rather, constantly changing, and thus, problematic for the participating actors. It was our purpose to shed light on the techniques used by actors to deal with the problematic nature of this situation. This being the case, a methodology was required that was flexible enough to deal with a constantly altering situation; the static nature of quantitative methodology was inappropriate here. Norman Denzin addresses this problem of emergent properties vis-a-vis quantitative methodology as follows:

> . . . Symbols and interaction must be brought together before an investigation is complete. To focus only on symbols, as an attitude questionnaire might, fails to record emergent and novel relationships these symbols have with observable behavior. (Denzin, 1972:79)

Thus, for example, auction participants could have been asked to answer questions dealing with the ways in which they bid. This technique, though, would not have yielded a picture of the results of their action if they had bid improperly or at the wrong moment, and what remedial efforts, if any, were taken to correct the mistake. This more detailed information was only available through actual observation of usage.

2. It was the author's belief, as stated earlier, that to construct the most valid picture of the rule system governing the auction situation would necessitate discovery of that system from within. With this in mind the researcher can create a continuum of research methods that approach this goal. The techniques lying farthest from the "within" perspective are the quantitative techniques. The data gleaned from such methods are meaningful more to the researcher than to the participant. The theories derived from such data, although perhaps valid, are not necessarily true from the actor's perspective; they are not his theories. Rather they are the theories of the researcher. Closer to being "within" the situation are participant observational techniques. The researcher gets into the situation and observes it "as if" he were an actor. Finally, one can actually get data that resides "within" the situation from accounts by true participants given while actually

acting in the situation: the explanations they themselves give to other actors to clarify their behavior.

The methods used in this research combine the second two above, and are justifiable in that our purpose was not to construct a rule system that the researcher felt actors followed, or that best explained actor behavior, but a rule system that actors followed in reality: a rule system they themselves had built.

Thus, by observation this researcher believes he has become attuned to what was meaningful to actors at an auction. By recording verbatim their responses in important situations, their own explanations for their behavior, the rules of behavior were made visible from their own words.

Since the major thrust of this research was to reveal certain patterns of rule usage, patterns not yet known, it was not possible to use any quantitative methodology requiring a priori positing of causal relations. The following attempts to explain why this is so. Sociological analysis is:

> . . . The attempt to answer one or more of only three questions: 1. What are the characteristics of a social phenomenon, the forms it assumes, the variations it displays? 2. What are the causes of a social phenomenon, the forms it assumes, the variations it displays? 3. What are the consequences of a social phenomenon, the forms it assumes, the variations it displays? As simple as it may seem, social inquiry and social theory reduce basically to the attempt to provide answers to these three questions.
>
> Attempts primarily to answer the first question are known as qualitative analysis, attempts primarily to answer the second and third questions are known as quantitative analysis. (Lofland, 1971:13)

Question one of Lofland's typology most resembles our own research questions. In further support for this choice Robert Stebbins, in a relevant discussion of the appropriate methodology to be used in studying definitions of the situation, may also be cited.

> Once one discovers some of the more important recurring situations for actors in an identity (by means of some form of observation), one can, if not already aware of them, begin to search for the cultural or habitual definitions available for each setting. This can be done most efficaciously by a combination of further direct observation and questionnaire interviewing. (1969:197)

He goes on to say:

> Description of standard definitions and recurrent situations is probably best carried out by means of some type of field research. However, once a substantive theory begins to take shape, experimentation as a mode of testing hypotheses becomes a feasible alternative. But until we know a particular kind of situation in sufficient detail, it will be impossible to simulate the possible cultural and habitual definitions available to the incumbents in such a situation so that we know which variable we wish to control. (1969:209)

A Final Note on the Drawbacks of the Method and the Exigencies of the Situation Under Study

The major criticism leveled against the use of a qualitative methodology is its inadequacy in the area of techniques of verification, i.e., reliability. No methods have been devised to check reliability of qualitative findings. (Bruyn,

1966:174) But, some researchers argue that just as qualitative findings are arrived at under the auspices of an observed consensus among informants, so, too, are quantitative findings of scientists arrived at through social consensus. Garfinkel asserts the following:

> Much of 'core sociology' consists of 'reasonable findings.' Many, if not most, situations of sociological inquiry are common sense situations of choice. Nevertheless, textbooks and journal discussions of sociological methods rarely give recognition to the fact that sociological inquiries are carried out under common sense auspices at the points where decisions about the correspondence between observed appearances and intended events are being made. (1967:1003; see also Friedrichs, 1970 for a similar discussion.)

Despite the question of validity as a drawback to the use of observational techniques, the methodology was chosen as the appropriate methodology for the reasons already stated and for the following: (1) The North Carolina auction situation afforded the opportunity to observe with complete anonymity, thereby assuring a "natural" situation.[3] (2) The North Carolina auction setting, composed as it was of a highly transitory population, was not amenable to the administration of questionnaires. (3) At the Missouri Auction School unstructured interviews were held since the role of

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[3]The researcher felt that no question of ethics presented itself in connection with not informing the observed that indeed they were being observed. The question did not arise since the researcher's presence or absence had no effect on the situation being studied. The situation's public nature did not warrant announcement of my presence.

the auctioneer was not yet well defined to the researcher. The free flow of an unstructured interview promised the richest data. (4) Finally, no hypothetico-deductive models have been proposed that would have enabled the use of structured quantitative techniques. Our purpose was to learn what was of importance in the auction setting, not to presuppose it.

CHAPTER III

THE COUNTRY AUCTION AS A SOCIAL FORM

Owing to the limitations of time and in the interest of preserving reader interest, only the auction as spatially and temporally circumscribed will be discussed. The process by which auctioneers contract for and advertise a sale, how the buyer views his purchases after the sale, and why people attend an auction in the first place will not be covered.

The word auction, commonly has two usages. First, it is a place to which one goes to bid on, and perhaps buy, various types of merchandise. Second, it is a peculiar type of economic activity in which, for all intents and purposes, the final exchange, i.e., the agreed upon selling price, is a consciously and intentionally negotiated reality. Unlike other, more common, forms of economic activity, the negotiation takes place "on the spot" and on every occasion of exchange. The auction is a place or situation in which goods are held up to sale and sold to the person offering the highest amount of money. Ralph Cassady, author of an economic study of the auction phenomenon, defines it as follows: "Basically, auctioning is a unique system of allocating scarce chattels or other property based on price making by competition of buyers for the right to purchase." (1967:8)

This chapter is an attempt to familiarize the reader

with the specific workings of any auction. Included here will be discussions of the various roles attached to the auction, the temporal stages of an auction, the subjective time perspective of auction participants, and the physical setting of the auction.

The Domain of the Auction

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly what may and may not be sold at auction. Although several auctioneers[1] have said that anything not attached with a fixed price is saleable, the policy of the Missouri Auction School (MAS) and the profession as a whole is to divide up the field in terms of specific types of merchandise usually sold at auction. Merchandise is categorized, and auctioneers are identifiable to one another by the category or categories of merchandise they sell. Thus, the MAS identifies its teachers by the merchandise they sell (see below). Most auctions fall into one of the following categories of sale: (1) household, (2) farm, (3) real estate, (4) bankruptcy and liquidation, (5) tobacco, (6) livestock, including purebred livestock, (7) antique, (8) art, (9) general merchandise, (10) estate.

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[1]Auctioneers interviewed were those connected with the Missouri Auction School. Most of them were instructors at the school although several were only peripherally connected with it.

However, these categories are by no means mutually exclusive. While certain types of sales, e.g., tobacco and purebred livestock, are highly specialized and usually are isolated occurrences,[2] one might easily encounter a household sale together with a real estate sale or a real estate sale with a farm sale as the following excerpts from newspaper ads for auctions illustrate.

> AUCTION SALE Saturday Nov. 17 10:00 AM
> Personal property and real estate of . . . .
> (The Greensboro Record, Nov. 13, 1973)
>
> AUCTION SALE - Household goods and personal property of . . . . (The Greensboro Record, Aug. 13, 1973)
>
> 3 1/2 Acres land, Machinery & Equipment at Auction (The Greensboro Record, July 13, 1973)

Thus, although there are general categories that auctioneers use for their sales, the types of merchandise sold are varied enough that one sale is rarely confinable to a single category.[3]

For convenience in exposition the scope of this research has been restricted to a type of auction usually

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[2]Tobacco auctions are the most specialized of all auctions in that all participants are professionals. Auctioneers and professional buyers for tobacco companies are the only people present in an active capacity.

[3]To give the reader some idea of the variety of sales in which the auction has been employed the following examples are provided: Orchid greenhouse, coins, Indian relics, Angus cattle, Appaloosa horses, trucks, hotels, groceries, records, cosmetics, furniture, jewelry, buffaloes, machinery, and boats. This list could go on indefinitely.

called the "country auction." Under this rubric are included sales--usually held in rural settings--of the farm, household, and antique type. Many of the findings are applicable to other types of auctions, but rather than spending time pointing to all the exceptions we are confining ourselves to the one auction category.

The Spatial Setting of the Auction

The physical context in which the type of auction being addressed takes place is an example of what Erving Goffman characterizes as a "public place," "any region in a community freely accessible to members of that community." (Goffman, 1963:9) This is in contrast to "private places" or ". . . soundproof regions where only members or invitees gather . . . ." (1963:9) Goffman's label, "public," cannot be attached to all aspects of the auction. Indeed, within the situation are sub-regions of a "private" nature. One need only think of the auctioneer planning strategies with his employer and employees or the family group as a buying unit conferring among themselves on the top price to be tendered by the unit on a particular item. These "private places" also correspond to Goffman's concept of "back region." (1959)

Unlike certain other public activities, auctions always occur in a bounded spatial setting. This setting may be either indoors or outdoors or a combination of both.

Indoor Settings

Indoor auctions take place in what are called auction houses or barns (livestock auctions frequently take place in livestock auction markets). Generally, these are large enclosed rooms with limited seating capacity exclusively used for auction sales. Seating capacity is frequently maximized by leaving doors open, thus allowing additional participants to peer in from the outside. Participants usually sit in linear rows of seats, the auctioneer positioned up front on a raised platform. Between the crowd and the auctioneer is an area of empty space called the ring. In the ring are positioned the ringman and usually the item up for sale (see below for a discussion of the ring and ringman). Areas within the barn are also set aside for displaying the merchandise to be sold at that particular auction. A well-attended sale may result in a crowded barn with bidders standing or sitting in every available empty space (see Figure Three).

From an auctioneer's perspective the barn situation is beneficial in the following ways: (1) It is always equipped with a public address system, maximizing the auctioneer's range of contact, while minimizing his effort. (2) The bidder's attention is highly focused on the auctioneer due to the centrality of the latter's position and the small space to which each bidder is usually confined. (3) The auctioneer need not cancel an auction due to inclement

weather. (4) Thanks to the restricted space, bidders are encouraged to occupy one space during their entire stay at the auction. This enables the auctioneer to become more knowledgeable about particular bidders than would be possible in an outdoor setting where bidders tend to wander around. Consequently, the auctioneer is able to focus his attention on individuals who, from their previous behavior, he suspects will be interested in certain types of merchandise. (5) The auction itself, being repeatedly held in the same location, becomes less transitory to the persons within reach of it. It becomes a fixture, not unlike the movie house, that can be attended time after time after time. Thus, one auction barn that sold new merchandise brought in by sellers on consignment to the auctioneer[4] held auctions every Friday night. Neighboring residents and their families attended, spending, as far as was observable, approximately the amount of money that would have been spent in taking the family to the local movie house. The auction barn went so

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[4]Auctioneers work almost exclusively on a commission basis. One auctioneer at the MAS said he typically worked on the following commission scale: 20 per cent--household sales, 7-8 per cent--farm sales, 10 per cent--bankruptcy sales, 6 per cent--real estate sales. These commission rates vary though from place to place and auctioneer to auctioneer. Furthermore, commission rates change with the size of the sale, thus, a very large sale would be worked on a smaller commission. The auctioneer's costs for advertising are usually added on to the commission fee. In the case of an auction barn, a dealer may bring one or several items in to the auctioneer to be sold at his next auction. The auctioneer would take them on consignment and take his commission out after the item was sold.

far as to provide a man selling popcorn.

The major physical drawback encountered by the auctioneer who runs a barn is that the available space may not be large enough to accommodate all interested bidders. In spite of this, all the auctioneers the author spoke to praised the barn situation. Indeed the prospective auctioneers at the MAS saw the acquisition of an auction barn as a desirable career goal.

From the bidder's perspective the indoor barn situation serves two purposes: First, it protects him from inclement weather. Second, because of its sound system and central positioning of the auctioneer and the item up for sale the bidder knows at all times what item is up for sale and, at any given moment, what the bid on that item is.[5]

The barn situation, however, does place the bidder at a disadvantage in that: (1) It allows for a less thorough and ongoing inspection of goods due to crowded conditions. (2) It is not conducive to selective inattention by the bidder since he is always under the watchful eye of the auctioneer or ringman. (3) Vis-a-vis the auctioneer, the bidder loses much of the anonymity present in outdoor

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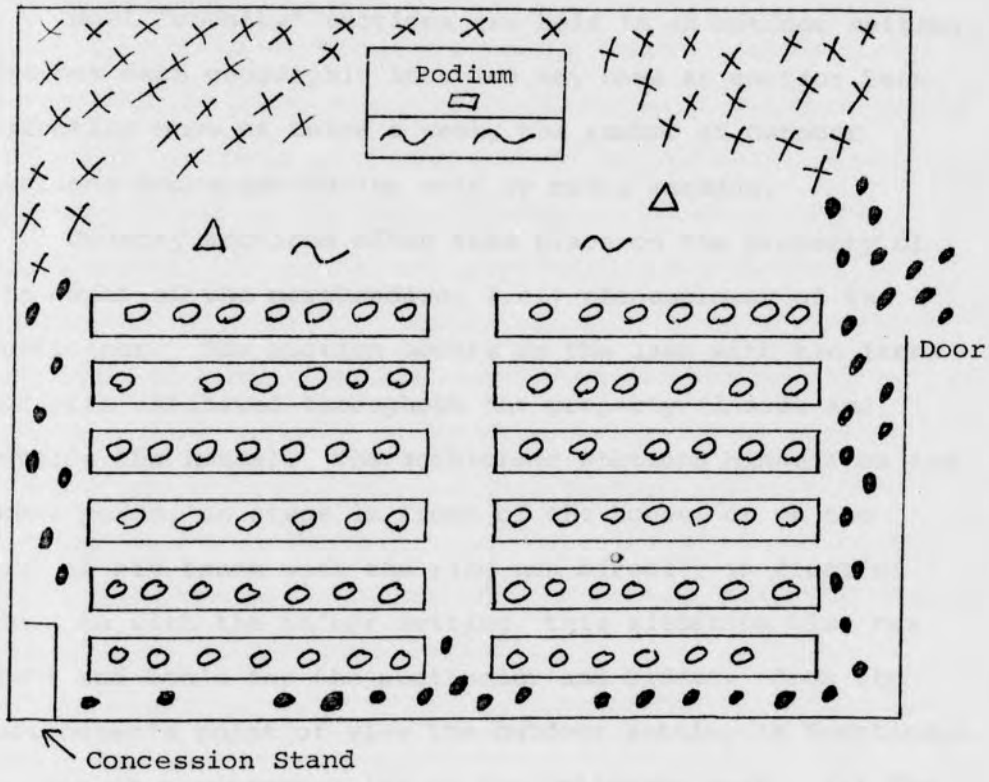
[5]When it is said that in the indoor setting the bidder knows at all times what the bid is and what item is up for sale, this is of course in the ideal sense. A novice to the auction scene might still have great difficulty in knowing what the bid is out of ignorance of the auctioneer's jargon rather than an inability to hear him.

FIGURE 3

THE AUCTION BARN



Key

- Auctioneer
- Ringmen
- Seated crowd members
- Standing crowd members
- Merchandise for sale
- Possible positioning of merchandise at time it comes up for sale

situations, thus becoming increasingly subject to the auctioneer's manipulation.

Outdoor Settings

Most "country" auctions are held in an outdoor setting. Whereas each geographic location may have an auction barn operating once or twice a week, the number of outdoor auctions decreases during cold or rainy seasons.

Country auctions often take place on the property of the owner of the merchandise, i.e., the employer of the auctioneer. The auction occurs on the lawn with the items for sale exhibited throughout the property (inside and outside the house). The auctioneer stations himself on the front porch, on steps in front of the house, or on the back of his truck with the ring man directly in front of him. As with the indoor setting, this situation also has pro's and con's for the auctioneer and bidder. From the auctioneer's point of view the outdoor setting is functional in that it maximizes sales in the following ways: (1) The outdoor space can frequently accommodate a greater number of prospective buyers and (2) the auction itself is often visible and audible to passers-by and might, therefore, attract persons who otherwise would not have attended.

The outdoor setting is dysfunctional to the auctioneer in a number of ways. (1) Buyers are not confined to a single space; thus, they tend to wander about the property, making

it difficult for the auctioneer to "fix" them in his mind. (2) The auction is subject to cancellation at any time due to weather conditions. (3) The public address system, if present, is at best makeshift and the auctioneer is never quite sure if he is being adequately heard. (4) Because the auction is held on the seller's property and both seller and property change from occasion to occasion, the auction patron must locate the site of each new auction. This situation is, of course, not favorable to maximizing attendance. (5) In the outdoor setting the auctioneer has less overall control of his crowd. Buyers are more free to come and go, to talk among themselves, and to examine merchandise while the sale is in progress. This detracts from the auctioneer's ability to focus attention on himself and on the item up for sale. It also limits his ability to maintain eye contact with bidders.

It should be noted, though, that generally the outdoor setting has one overriding advantage for the auctioneer. It is free from overhead and maintenance costs.

The outdoor setting is functional for the buyer because: (1) Due to the large physical space merchandise is usually freely accessible to examination at all times during the sale. Since many persons are always "milling" about one does not feel embarrassed to "look around" even while the sale is in progress. (2) The buyer is less apt to feel "trapped" by an auctioneer. If he does feel he

is being pressured to bid by glances from an auctioneer or ringman, he need only wander off to another spot thus breaking eye contact. This is possible since space is not at a premium as in indoor settings, and boundaries are not well defined--thus allowing greater amounts of unobtrusive movement. (3) The buyer is more free to engage in selective inattention because his actions do not affect his neighbor to the degree it does in cramped indoor settings.

Dysfunctionally, the outdoor situation subjects the bidder to: (1) inclement weather, (2) difficulty in hearing and seeing the auctioneer, thus finding himself ill-informed about items up for sale, and (3) inconvenience in trying to locate auctions in out-of-the-way places.

Although in both indoor and outdoor settings the auction retains its basic character as a "public" occurrence, it can be seen in summary that the indoor setting is a more confined one, more readily susceptible of definition by the auctioneer. The outdoor situation, on the other hand, generally characterized by more "escape space" for the buyer and much more permeable boundaries, is less amenable to auctioneer definition. The buyer, through the use of physical positioning and selective inattention, is more able to manipulate and impose his definitions on the situation.

Social Roles

Each participant in an auction situation can be placed in one of the following socially defined and rule governed roles: bidder, auctioneer, ringman and a residual category of others.

Unlike some "public places," e.g., the bar, the school, the country auction is open to all persons regardless of their intention or ability to participate. One need not show evidence of competence to be admitted. Thus, a draft card or driver's license as proof of having reached an age where competence is taken for granted is not required. In fact, no boundary maintenance procedures are present at all except for aspects of physical space affecting interaction. Once in attendance at an auction one of the above role options is expected.

The Bidder

The bidder is one of the several prospective buyers for an item. Bidding is by no means synonymous with buying. Although many bidders will compete on most items, only one will ultimately become a buyer. A bidder can be seen as a person with enough interest in an item to make an offer, a bid, on it. In any given auction one need not bid on every item. To the auctioneer all persons present are at least prospective bidders, and to the bidder himself even a bid on one item is sufficient to see oneself in that role. Let it be noted, though, that the author, after having bid on an

item early in an auction, would begin to question his identity as "bidder" later in the auction if he did not reaffirm the role by bidding again. The role seems definitely in need of reinforcement. Unlike a criminal who need commit but one crime to be labeled as such for the duration of the situation, i.e., his life, the bidder can lose his role. The auctioneer in fact will label a person as an active bidder by giving special attention to him while he is bidding, but, one finds that, if one refrains from bidding over an extended period of time, the auctioneer loses interest and no longer directs his attention in his direction. The role must be actively followed for it to remain attached to a person in the eyes of that person or the auctioneer.

Generally, bidders (in our usage anyone who bids even once) can be classed in two schemas: in terms of their bidding styles and in terms of their bidding motives.

Bidding Styles. - - Auctioneers identify several different styles of bidding. They have classified styles as: "some jump up," "cool," "slow," "fast," obvious bidders, secretive bidders, impulsive bidders, and "those who let everyone know."

The styles can be condensed into two polar components.

Impulsive . . . . . Non-impulsive

Secretive . . . . . Open

Both of these continua will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

Bidding Motives. - - Bidding can be viewed as motivated in each case by one or more of the following factors: 1. Personal interest in an item: a. The bidder is interested in an item purely for personal reasons and may either like the item or have use for it. b. The personal interest may revolve around a sentimental interest, the bidder being related to the owner of the sale merchandise (perhaps deceased). c. Individuals, caught by the momentum of the auction, may find themselves bidding on items not really wanted. 2. Professional interest in an item: The person bids on an item knowing that it can be attained at a price below its "true market value" with the sole intention of re-selling the item at a profit. 3. Bidding for fun or curiosity: Within any group of bidders are those who bid marginally just to see what it "feels" like. Such bidders bid low and with no expectation of becoming a buyer. 4. Bidding in order to jack up the price: a. The shill,[6] in this case a bidder in the employ of the auctioneer or the owner, is one of this type. The shill bids on an item solely in order to raise its price as high as will be tolerated by other, unknowing,

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[6]Erving Goffman describes the role of the shill as follows: "A shill is someone who acts as though he were an ordinary member of the audience but is in fact in league with the performers. Typically, the shill either provides a visible model for the audience of the kind of response the performers are seeking or provides the kind of audience response that is necessary at the moment for the development of the performance." (1959:146)

but interested, bidders. Although the auctioneers interviewed universally denied widespread employment of this role, they all acknowledged its existence in the field. One auctioneer said that shills were most common at carnival, jewelry, and tack auctions. He told the story of a tack auction where riding crops were for sale. The shill would bid high on one crop and actually buy it (this is a variation on the "normal" shill role in which he does not purchase anything). The auctioneer then announced that he had more crops just like the one just sold and would sell to anyone who wanted one at the price that was just bid (by the shill). b. Instructors at the MAS constantly referred to a ploy used by professional buyers to bid up an item they did not want but knew a business competitor wanted and was bidding on. The competitor was forced to buy the item high, thus compelling him to increase his subsequent retail selling price. 5. The shill-professional: In this case the bidder is employed by the owner or auctioneer not for the purpose of jacking the bid up as in example 4.a. but rather to buy back any item that is being sold at too low a price. The item will be re-sold at a later date when a better price can be obtained. If a certain price is not attained (and sometimes if the shill cannot jack up the price himself), he will buy the item. One informant said that the shill ". . . Is most common when an auctioneer is selling his own goods. Also it is more prevalent in the auction

house or barn type settings."

An example of this type of situation was related to the researcher by a graduate of the Missouri Auction School. An antique dealer wanted to sell an item at a local auction house. The auctioneer reacted as follows:

> I do not mind any dealer coming in to my auction barn out there and saying, 'Look, in this curved glass china cabinet I have a hundred and twenty five dollars.' And I have no qualms, at all, on a dealer bidding on his merchandise, where he gets his money back. But when that guy gets his money, that's when I load it into him.

In other words the auctioneer allowed the antique dealer to jack up the price to a point where he wasn't losing money, but, if the dealer got greedy and tried to jack up the price further (running the risk of losing real buyers) the auctioneer was prepared to "load it into him." This meant he was prepared to raise the price himself by saying he had a higher bid than he actually had and eventually sell the item to the dealer himself. This would make the dealer who consigned the item responsible for the auctioneer's commission even though he would not get his money for the item, having bought it himself.

The Auctioneer

> An Auctioneer should have a pleasing personality. He should be witty and should always keep his audience in a jovial mood. An Auctioneer should be one of the best known and best liked men in the community. His character should be above reproach. An Auctioneer should be able to stand before a crowd and look it straight in the eye and speak in a manner that will hold the interest of his

> listeners. An Auctioneer should learn to be a supersalesman. (Home Study Manual, Kansas City: Missouri Auction School.)

At any auction it is the purpose of the auctioneer to control and direct a crowd toward the activity of bidding on merchandise offered for sale. It is his job to "call for bids" from prospective buyers. This is done through what is called the auctioneer's "chant." The chant is a rhythmical sing song combining a tendered bid with a bid the auctioneer is asking for. Thus, the auctioneer might say: "One dollar bid, now a quarter, now a quarter, will ya give a quarter?" This simply means that someone has bid one dollar and the auctioneer is now asking all interested parties to raise the price and bid one dollar and twenty-five cents. Another example of the bid calling chant would be: "Twenty-four dollar bid, what about the five, will ya give twenty-five?" or "Fifty dollar bid now sixty, now sixty, will ya go sixty?"

The tendered bid is combined with the asked bid through the use of what are known in the trade as filler words. These are words or phrases such as "give me," "bid 'em an buy 'em at," "ya able to buy at," "will you make it," "will you bid," or "here we go" that connect the bid and the asked price, e.g., "Five dollar bid, do you want it at six, here we go six, bid 'em and buy 'em at six, do I hear six dollar bid."

As will be shown in the next chapter the auctioneer follows specified and taken-for-granted rules that allow him

to manipulate the chant and the "asked increment" with the goal of keeping strict control of both the pace of the auction and the price goods are sold for. Conversely, as will also be shown, the bidder can follow established tactics to manipulate the chant to the detriment of the auctioneer.

Once the auctioneer reaches what he feels is the highest bid, i.e., the last bid he will receive, he "knocks down" the merchandise to the final bidder and proceeds to the next item.

As was stated earlier, auctioneers are generally classified within the trade according to the type of merchandise they sell. In its brochure, the MAS identifies its teachers as follows: "Colonel X is a highly respected real estate, farm, and antique auctioneer," "Colonel Y is a well respected farm sale and livestock market auctioneer," "Colonel Z is a prominent Hereford auctioneer," and "Colonel W is an outstanding real estate and livestock auctioneer."

Although uncommon among themselves,auctioneers may also be identified as to the type or style of chant they use. One auctioneer gave the following styles: (1) talking chant, (2) rhythm chant, and (3) singing chant. These three styles lie on a continuum, number one being the least ornate and rhythmic and number three the most.

At different types of auctions one would be likely to hear different styles of chant. Thus, the tobacco chant, a singing type of chant, is used, naturally enough, at tobacco

auctions. It is for the most part unintelligible to all but the initiated (professional tobacco buyers). In the chant of one tobacco auctioneer each monetary unit had the following code words that enabled him to proceed with greater speed and rhythm: one = mon, two = dudaloo, three = ree, four = fo, five = fi, six = sing dollar, seven = semon dollar, eight = adleight, nine = nine-al-nine, one half = hala, one quarter = quala. It should also be noted that the tobacco chant differs from other auction chants. In the former the auctioneer cries the bid that he already has rather than the bid that he wants (as in other chants). This is due in part to the presence of only professional buyers at the tobacco auction. As professionals they know what the next expected increment is and the auctioneer does not have to ask them for it. Another reason is that in tobacco auctions the difference between the initial bid and the selling price is very small. Thus, it would be more difficult to use different standard increments. One Missouri tobacco auctioneer described the scene as follows:

> . . . You usually have about, oh, six, seven buyers. And they sell this tobacco they go one cent at a time. When you sell tobacco it's a little different than selling your ordinary merchandise because you cry the bid you got. You're not saying I've got fifty-two dollars now three, you just start at fifty-two and you cry three till they give you four. And it's very fast.

Another auctioneer at the MAS commented while listening to a tobacco auctioneer: "Every six seconds ya sell a basket of

tobacco. Every time that auctioneer takes a breath he sells a basket of tobacco." This gives the reader some idea of the speed achieved with the chant.

Above and beyond mastery of chant the auctioneer must have a familiarity with the "true" value of the merchandise he sells. Contrary to popular belief, the final bid received by the auctioneer on an item is not left to chance. Rather, the arrangement of a satisfactory final bid is a major goal of the auctioneer. The strategies he uses to achieve this end are discussed below.

Although the auctioneer is also concerned with booking sales, setting the auction up, and finalizing sales, these aspects will not be dealt with here. Our discussion will be confined to his actions during the sale.

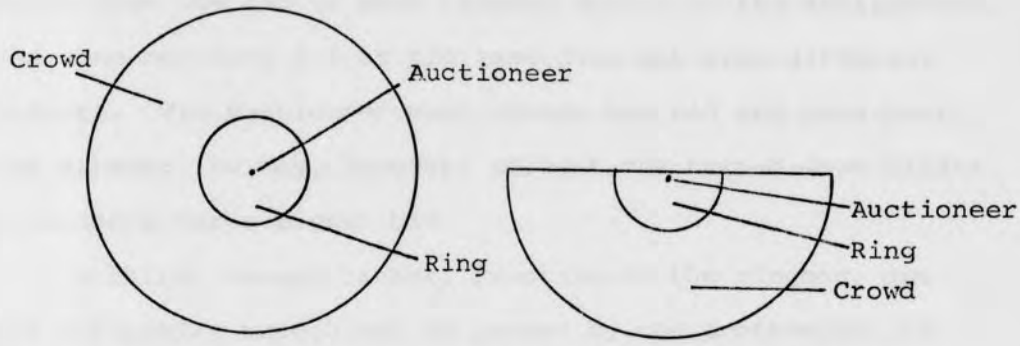
The Ringman

Spatially, temporarily, and functionally the ringman stands between the crowd, i.e., bidders, others, and the auctioneer.

Spatially. - - The ring, as it is called, is the space that separates the crowd from the auctioneer. It is occupied by one or more ringmen, and into and out of it flow the goods that come up for sale. The ring itself creates a space free of the crowd, visible to the crowd, and on which the crowd can focus some of its attention. In shape the ring can be round or half round (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4

THE RING



Temporally. - - The ringman is, as it were, temporarily located between the crowd and the auctioneer since many auctioneers begin as crowd members, become ringmen, and finally become auctioneers. In a lecture given at the MAS dealing with ring work it was stated, that "Most of you will be a ringman before an auctioneer." In interviews with auctioneers at the MAS it was found that some of them indeed started in the ring.

Functionally. - - Manifestly the ringman functions to: (1) hold up and exhibit the particular item up for sale and (2) to "catch bids," that is, to constantly scan the crowd looking for bids. When he spots a bid, he turns it in to the auctioneer who works it into his chant. The ringman is in the auctioneer's employ.

Auctioneers usually employ one or two ringmen, and the two or three persons (two ringmen plus an auctioneer) function as a team. Though an auctioneer with one ringman is a fairly

straightforward arrangement, when a second or third ringman is added, the situation becomes quite complex. Situations arise when the two or more ringmen submit to the auctioneer the same monetary bid at the same time but from different bidders. The auctioneer must choose one bid and pass over the others: he may, however, solicit the turned down bidder or bidders for a higher bid.

A third, though latent, function of the ringman, one not officially recognized as proper by the profession, is the part he plays in "working the crowd," or what one auctioneer at the MAS calls doing "a little persuasive selling." In working the crowd a ringman will do one or more of the following: (1) Everytime a ringman receives a bid he informs the auctioneer by yelling the words "Yea!" or "Yup!" in a booming voice. When these cries occur frequently, perhaps yelled by two ringmen stationed at opposite sides of the ring, the yelling achieves its own momentum quite apart from the auctioneer's chant and is complementary to it. As will be shown later this momentum aids in pushing the bidders into bidding faster and, thus, higher. (2) The ringman may move directly into a crowd carrying the item that is up for sale. He presents the item to bidders who have shown interest in it but have discontinued or not begun bidding. This is done with the hope of getting them to bid on the item. (3) The ringman may strike up a conversation with a bidder, almost as an aside to the auction, cajoling him to bid again

and telling him how the item up for bid is going much too cheaply.

In any event, in his capacity as "persuasive seller" the ringman can be seen to function in the same manner as the carnival barker does in standing in front of his concession, and, indeed, the ringman does impart a certain honky tonk feeling to the auction.

Others

Under the rubric "others" residually fall several roles marginally important to the auction situation but not nearly as well specified culturally as the proceeding ones.

The Owner. - - The owner is the employer of the auctioneer and owns the goods being sold. In some cases, especially in auction houses or barns, the auctioneer and the owner are one and the same person. If, however, this is not the case, the owner may be introduced to the crowd at the beginning of an auction by the auctioneer. The owner does serve a limited function in the role of rule maker. He may place what is called a "reserve price" on certain items in his sale. This means that he will not allow an item to be sold below a certain minimum price. This is not to say that he would not take more than his reserve price for the item but rather that he would not take less. A reserve price placed by the owner on any item is in effect an added situated rule and changes the entire course of events in relation to that item (see below).

The Observer. - - The observer is an ever-present role at the auction. So common is it that many auctioneers, in making their opening speech, inform the crowd that bidders as well as "those of you who have just come to watch" are equally welcome. An observer may be present in one of several capacities. First, he may be adjunct to a buyer, e.g., a family member accompanying a buyer. Second, the observer might be a comparison shopper who is pricing goods to determine either the value of a similar item he might own or whether an item he is about to buy privately (not at auction) is worth the asking price. Third, he could be a prospective seller. The Missouri Auction School is wont to point out that an observer in the crowd may be sizing up the auctioneer for a future sale he is planning. An instructor noted the following: ". . . Introduce yourself. Let the people know who's conducting the auction. And there might be somebody out there that if you do a good job and they know your name they might hire you for a sale." Fourth, and by far most important, the observer is a prospective bidder. Observers may easily find themselves involved in the auction's pace, bidding on items they did not originally intend to buy. At this point it seems appropriate to add that the writer observes that many people go to an auction without any definite intention to buy. They go to watch, and, seeing an item that interests them, they bid, and perhaps buy. Fifth, it is conceivable that others might be present who simply enjoy listening to the

auctioneer.[7]

The Temporal Sequence of an Auction

Pre-Auction Activity

The country auction, observed here, was typically held on a Saturday morning at 10:00 A.M. and in an outdoor setting. The crowd would generally gather by around 9:30 or 9:45 A.M. when the merchandise would have already been set out for examination by the auctioneer and his assistants. Frequently, a local church or charity group sold light refreshments, and the half hour or so set aside for merchandise inspection before the start of the auction would evolve into a social hour during which the auctioneer and the crowd would mingle and talk.

This period of time is important to the prospective buyer. Although he probably has a fair idea of the types of goods to be sold, such knowledge having been acquired through the reading of pre-auction newspaper ads and flyers, it is then that the buyer begins developing a strategy for the auction. At this time the prospective buyer chooses the items that he will bid on; it is here that he

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[7]During the course of an auction persons assume many roles; he may be a bidder at one time, a buyer at another, and an observer at still another. There exists no single rubric to encompass all roles under the auctioneer's gaze. Such an all encompassing term is needed in the context of this paper. The terms "crowd" or "audience" are used synonomously to fill that need.

sets his priorities. These priorities must necessarily change over the course of the auction as he is outbid on some items or bids successfully on others (see the above discussion of the concept of emergence). The inspection period lasts until the auctioneer calls the crowd together and begins his "opening talk." This preliminary speech by the auctioneer, manifestly an introduction, functions to fix the auctioneer in a specific relationship with his audience.

The MAS stresses the learning of an opening talk and teaches the specific elements to be included in it. Ideally, this speech establishes the auctioneer as a man who has been trusted by the owner with his goods and who can, therefore, be trusted by the audience. At a country auction the owner is likely to be a neighbour of many in the audience. Moreover, the speech is an attempt to place the auctioneer on a personal footing with the audience and establish his supremacy over it. Thus, the school instructs its students:

> Make sure your audience can see you. Don't lean or hold on to anything. Watch your nervous habits - twiddling your fingers or scratching your head. Leave you glasses on or take them off, but don't be putting them on and off. See that your suit is well pressed, your hair combed. Don't use the same motion over and over. Try to give the best there is in you and do not be embarrassed. Stand easily with your weight on the ball (sic) of your feet. Always know what you are talking about. (Home Study Manual, Kansas City: The Missouri Auction School.)

They also say:

> When making your opening talk, be sure you know what you are going to say. Do not try to memorize your talk. Tell the audience you are glad to see so many

> smiling faces, look pleasant yourself. Tell them why Mr. Jones is having his sale and make some remarks about what is being sold . . . . Give them the terms of the sale. Give them the name of the clerk and where they can pay for the purchases. Mention the fact that all goods must be settled for before being removed. Ask Mr. Jones if he has anything to say. Usually he will say, "I have nothing to say, everything is in your hands to sell to the highest bidders." (Home Study Manual, Kansas City: The Missouri Auction School.)

Finally, the opening speech attempts to define the coming situation. Thus, introductory talks are typically concluded with a remark to the effect of "Let's have a good snappy sale."

The Auction

Once an auction has begun it is a repeating sequence of one event, different to some degree in content, but, in each occasion of its usage, structurally the same. The sequence proceeds as follows:

1. An item is held up to view by the auctioneer or, more likely, by a ringman.

2. The auctioneer either asks for a bid or sets the item in himself at a certain amount, lowering that amount until a bid is given.

3. The auctioneer via his chant calls for and accepts bids from prospective buyers.

4. The auctioneer makes a judgement as to the likelihood of receiving more bids.

5. If he decides that no more bids are forthcoming, he knocks the item down to the bidder offering the last and,

therefore, highest bid.

6. The buyer takes physical possession of the item,[8] and becomes responsible for making good his bid.

These six steps, although not the only events taking place, can be seen as the basic and repeating structure of the auction. The steps repeat themselves in each auction as many times as there are separate lots up for sale. Knowledge of the situated rules governing these six steps would presumably enable any participant to function as an in-the-know actor in the auction situation, at least in the role of bidder or buyer. The auctioneer, of course, although also subject to these rules, is responsible for "making the thing go" in an overall sense and is, therefore, subject to a more complex rule system.

To clarify the six steps an illustration of them in use follows:

> All right a blow torch set 'em in here and roll. Brass there! What's your pleasure on 'em and go. Hey to bid three dollar bill, two dollar billd, twodle dollar bid will ya give me two? Twodle dollar bid will ya give me two dollar bill? Hey to bid a one dollar bid will ya go one? Hey! Da bidle one dollar bid now half. One dollar any one half the half will ya go one and a half? Hey! One dollar bid half and a half will ya go one and a half, half and a half will ya go one and a half. One dollar ya bid half and a half will ya go one and a half at a half will ya go one and a half?

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[8]In some auction settings the buyer does not take physical possession of the item until some time later. For example, in a real estate auction the buyer does not become officially the owner for several days, and, even then, he has an option to back out of the deal.

> You go one and a half sir? One dollar you bid, bid a half? Hey! One dollar ya bid half and a half, will ya go one and a half? Ya all in all done, one and a half? Let's rollem a dollar. Right there number six. Let's go boys, let's move it.
>
> . . . . . .
>
> All right a pulley there. Windlass pulley. Send 'em in here and roll. Your pleasure's mine. Two dollar bill? Hey ya bid two twodle dollar? One dollar now two, hey, one dollar ya bid two? Twodle dollar bid give me two, one dollar, bid half bid half will ya go one and a half? One dollar one and a half, now two the bill two dollar bid will ya give me two? Two dollar bill, two dollars, now half, two dollar you bid half bid half will ya go two and a half? Hey! Two dollars ya bid half bid a half will ya go two and a half? Ya all in? Ya all done? Will ya give two an a half? And rollem two dollars right here. Number what? twenty-seven.
>
> All right now got one big wagon wheel. Ya can put ya up a post now with that. What's yer pleasure on 'em and go here. Send 'em in here and roll. Hey to bid ten dollar bid will ya give me ten. (Total elapsed time one minute eleven seconds) (Greensboro, North Carolina: Spring, 1973)

The Perception of Time at the Auction

As stated earlier the subjective impression of time is important in examining the way in which actors perceive any situation. (McHugh, 1968) Time in the present context is always social time (Husserl, 1964) in that its perception and meanings are conditioned not only by personal biography but also by needs, goals, and attitudes in any situation.

> Time is, then, the experience of inhibited action in which the goal is present as achieved through the individual assuming the attitude of contact response, and thus leaving the events that should elapse between the beginning and the end of the act present only in their abstracted character as passing. In the presence of an indefinite number of such physical objects in the surrounding field, the relation of these events to any one act is

> blurred into a general succession of events abstracted from any one series. It is rendered definite by breaking it up into the events or separate steps of acts which take place with reference to this field. (Mead, 1938:232)

In the context of this research it would be profitable to view the ways that time perception differs between the two major categories, i.e., auctioneers and bidders.

The Bidder's Time Context

A bidder's perception of time passage at the auction is directly contingent upon the presence or absence of items for sale that are of interest to him.[9] High interest is equivalent to a sense of quick passage of time as opposed to low interest that is equivalent to a sense of slow time passage and boredom.[10]

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[9]Interest at an auction may also be heightened by inappropriate or unusual occurrences, but these are not pertinent here.

[10]Paul Fraisse observes: "Instead of being the interval between the awakening of a desire and its gratification, time may be the obstacle to be overcome in order to continue a task which has been undertaken, when the initial impulse is exhausted. If there is still an element of waiting, it is the expectation of finishing the job . . . . The time to be overcome is that of the duration of the action which must be carried out in order to attain an objective defined by social obligations: to finish one's meal, homework, or working day. The difference between the present result and that which must be realized give rise to awareness of duration: a child would express this consciousness by such words as, 'I'm bored' or 'it takes so long.' The Germans use the word langeweile to express the feeling of boredom caused by a situation from which we cannot escape; the word means a long time." (1964:202-3)

Items may be of interest to an audience member for one or more of the following reasons: (1) A desire to buy the item, (2) An interest in acquiring information on the value of an item, (3) A desire to know who is interested in an item, (4) An interest in knowing if the crowd of bidders is "cheap" or "being taken." For example, if an audience member knows what a certain item is worth, he can judge the audience's "buying savvy" by the price the item goes for. If the item is bid up very high, the crowd is being taken, but if the item goes for well under its value, the crowd is not being fair, is cheap.

Thus, the crowd member perceives the auction situation in terms of the relevance that objects for sale have for him. In graphing bidder-buyer interest one might find that periods of high interest and a compressed time sense would occur a number of times over the entire length of the sale, while periods of low interest accompanied by an expanded time sense would also be distributed over the entire auction.

The length of the auction may also affect the crowd member's interest level and subsequent time conception. Over the course of the auction interest level steadily declines. Although late in an auction interest level may peak at times with the introduction of a particularly interesting item for sale, the overall interest declines to a point where one is only "marking time" between objects of interest.

Time Contexts for the Auctioneer

The auctioneer's time conception is conditioned by two factors. First, the objective amount of time it will take him to sell off all his merchandise, and second, his perception, gleaned from repeated experience, of crowd interest level and staying power vis-a-vis the particular goods he is selling. His actions are geared to maximizing crowd involvement; thus, the auctioneer constructs the entire auction around an attempt to preserve his crowd and minimize their boredom.

The auctioneer's oft repeated phrase "auction means action" sums up his time perception; one of non-stop flow from beginning to end.

> Keep your sale moving. Pick three or four items or animals that you know will sell good. Start your sale with these numbers and sell them fast. This sets a tempo for the sale and you will have a brisk, fast, snappy sale and your crowd will want to stay until the last article is sold. (Home Study Manual, Kansas City: The Missouri Auction School)

The concern with speed, excitement, and preserving crowd interest establishes the auctioneer's perception of time. A dragging sale will produce attempts on his part to inject new speed and interest. To this end various ploys and tactics are used. These will be discussed in the following chapter.

CHAPTER IV

SITUATED RULES AND THEIR USE: AN EXAMPLE

In this chapter the major findings of this research project will be presented. Here the objective and minimally required situated rules governing the auction situation will be given. The various ways in which these rules are used, i.e., how they are subjectively defined in terms of individual's goals and strategies, will be dealt with.

To view the bidder's overall strategy as governed by two goals will help the reader: First, the bidder attempts to minimize item prices; second, and simultaneously, he attempts to maximize his chance of obtaining those desired items: "In this type of price making would-be buyers attempt to outbid one another, thus tending to force the selling price to, or at least toward, the level of the successful bidder's highest price." (Cassady, 1967:12) On the other hand the auctioneer's overall strategy revolves about a single goal, that of maximizing price without concern for who becomes an item's ultimate buyer.

Only situated rules governing bidders and auctioneers and necessary to successfully carry out their respective roles will be examined. While it is believed that such rules characterize competent auction behavior and are crucial to the situation, no claim is made to their exhaustiveness.

Other yet undiscovered rules might also be present.

Concretely, the auction situation is a unity of action. The various roles and the rules governing those rules are mutually interdependent, interlocking rather than separate. A rule governing one role necessarily affects all other situational roles. Analytically, though, the rules had to be separated out as to the primary direction of their application. Thus, for the purpose of clarity the situated rules will be presented in the following manner. Rules primarily governing bidder behavior will be stated first followed by rules attaching primarily to auctioneer behavior. Each objective situated rule will be given a number and then stated. Following each objective rule the observed or postulated elaborative features will be discussed and exemplified. Examples of improper elaboration will also be presented when available. Situated rules governing who a bidder is, bidding sequencing, negotiation, the relationship between bidder and items up for sale, and the auctioneer's responsibilities to the bidder and the employer are presented. To gain an overview the reader might find it useful to examine first only the numbered objective situated rules. Then, the reader could go back to see how objective rules stand up in the face of subjective elaboration by participants.

Rules Governing the Behavior of Bidders at the Country Auction

Rules Governing Who is a Bidder

1. To enter the role of "bidder" the crowd member must, at some point during the auction, allow himself to be recognized as such by the auctioneer.

It is the responsibility of the prospective buyer to get his bid recognized by the auctioneer. Within this requirement the prospective bidder may generally submit a bid in one of two ways. A bid may be submitted in person with the bidder and auctioneer in a face-to-face relationship during the auction, or it may be submitted before the auction, perhaps by mail or telephone.

In the first method of bidding, the bidder enters the bidding by selecting one of an array of conventionally understood potential gestural signals. As has been stated earlier, a bidder may be rather secretive in his bidding, thus, he may only scratch his nose, pull his ear, wink, or make any gesture so long as it is recognized by the auctioneer. One auctioneer commented:

> I'll tell you what about this bidding. I never worry too much about how a guy is bidding, or what he's doing. I'll take ya if ya breath hard. Hell, just wiggle your ears, pick your nose and 'bout anything, I'll take you if you breath hard. And ninety-nine time out of you'll be right, and the hundreth time you luck out anyway. (MAS teacher)

Another auctioneer noted that "They're (bidders) gonna give ya little dumb bids, watch for em." (MAS teacher) The question

of whether a bidder has entered a bid or is just scratching his head is highly problematic for the auctioneer, he must chance making a mistake when recognizing a bidder.

On the other hand, a bidder may be quite open about his bidding and raise an arm or all out "Yea" or perhaps call out the monetary amount he desires to bid. With this bidding style the auctioneer has little difficulty in distinguishing between gestures meaningful as a bid and those with different meanings, although he infrequently does. Sometimes a bidder will protest that the auctioneer did not acknowledge his bid and sold the item to another party. As is usually the case, the auctioneer will caution the bidder to make certain he is seen in the future.

A bidder may use this recognition factor as a tactic useful in obtaining a desired item. One auctioneer relates the following:

> Some bidders, when they are not going to bid any higher for something, noticeably relax and their attention shifts. Some also fake relaxing as if they were through, then bid again as the last minute. (MAS teacher)

This tactic takes both the auctioneer and fellow bidders off guard perhaps enabling the bidder to buy an item uncontested. Several variations on this technique have been observed by the researcher. For example, a bidder will submit his bid and then turn to his neighbor in a show of conversation. The auctioneer is led to believe the bidder has lost interest. At the last minute the bidder turns back to the auctioneer

and submits a bid. In another case, a bidder was actually heard to tell the auctioneer he was no longer interested in the item in question. Again, at the last minute, he seemed to change his mind and submit another bid.

2. The audience as a whole assumes responsibility for bidding on a given item.

This very general rule refers to the following phenomenon. When an item is placed up for sale by the auctioneer someone must bid on it. If no bids are received, there is a perceptible feeling of uncomfortableness in the crowd. Crowds have been observed to become visibly restless, milling increases. Bidders begin conversing with each other in an attempt to avoid the gaze of the auctioneer. It is interesting to note that at such times the auctioneer seems to become a non-person in the sense that he becomes ignored by a crowd that does not want to face his helpless pleadings for a bid. Although no bidder feels that "he" should bid unless he wants the item, the crowd feels that "somebody" should bid. When a crowd momentarily refrains from bidding it forces the auctioneer into a situation usually resembling the following:

> Three blue bottles. How much? For the three blue bottles. Let's go. Boys don't hold back from biddin. We'll be here all day. Just fall right in there if you're interested on them bid on em. How much for the three blue bottles? (pause) How much! Just start 'em, all ya gotta do is start 'em. Ya gotta give us a start. (North Carolina Auctioneer)

Rules Governing Bidding Sequencing

3. Once a decision to bid has been made by a prospective bidder, that bidder, in order to actualize his decision, must submit a bid higher than any previous bid (if any) on the item in question. Two bidders, then, may never successfully occupy the same monetary bidding point.

Thus, although a bidder is free to bid any amount, regardless of what the auctioneer is asking for, his bid must never be under the previous bid or equal to it. An example of this rule's being broken by a bidder and resulting in a brief interactive breakdown follows:

> Seven and a half and now eight? Will ya give eight? Seven and a half now will ya go eight? Seven and a half (a bid is submitted) eight dollars now a half. Eight dollars will ya give me a half? Eight now. (pause) How much? I got eight over here. (The bidder who duplicated the eight dollar bid changes his bid to eight and a half.) (North Carolina Auctioneer)

A bidder may never elaborate on this rule (by bidding lower than a previous bidder) without being sanctioned. It should be noted that in some cases an auctioneer is free to elaborate this rule, though, by not accepting a bid even though it is higher than a previous bid (see below rule number twenty-three for further discussion).

4. The bidding interaction is to assume the same sequencing pattern as that of a "normal" conversation, that is, a statement by one participant is to be followed by a statement by a different participant, not the same participant. Thus, a sequential bid by the same bidder is akin to talking

to oneself.

To bid twice in sequence is to impute to fellow bidders an inability to respond effectively to one's statement. Also, to bid sequentially would have the effect of bidding against oneself. An appropriate bidding segment would look like this:

order of bidders	A	B	C	A	C	B
the bid	$5	$10	$15	$20	$25	$30

A bidding segment that would result in breakdown due to improper rule usage would appear like this:

order of bidders	A	B	C	C	A	B
the bid	$5	$10	$15	$20	$25	$30

At one auction this rule was actually broken with the following results:

> What'll ya give for it? Who'll give a dollar bill? Who'll start at one dollar? I have one, now two. One dollar now two, who'll give two? One dollar who'll give two? (A bid of two dollars is offered by the bidder who just bid one dollar.) Two now (pause by auctioneer) Didn't you start at one? (laughter in crowd) We ain't gonna let this man bid against his self. (A bid of two dollars is now offered by a new bidder.) Two dollars, I have now a half.

Rules of Negotiation

5. The value of items at an auction sale is to remain an unknown quantity between prospective bidders until formal negotiation takes place.

This rule is instituted by participants in the form of indifference. Objects up for sale are inspected with

indifference and quickly thrown aside in some cases. For the most part prospective buyers hide their interest and even go so far as to downgrade an item that truly interests them. All this, of course, serves to underrate the "social value" of an item and, thus, its subsequent cost to the buyer during the auction. It should be noted that this rule, although playing a large part in the tactics of a buyer, has more the force of custom rather than law. It is, however, self-enforcing, for it would be quite contrary to the bidder's interest in buying cheap to violate it.

6. Bidding may take place only within the time period between the auctioneer's first call for bids and his announcement that the item has been sold.

Several valid elaborations on this rule were observed. As stated in rule number one, a bidder may submit bids to an auctioneer before the auction by mail or telephone. Although technically this is invalid in terms of the present rule, it is an accepted practice, for the auctioneer merely enters the bid at the appropriate time rather than at the end of bidding at the highest, and therefore winning, bid. Thus, if an auctioneer received a mail bid of $200, he would enter that bid after the closest bid under $200. If there were no further bids, the $200 mail bid would buy the item. If, however, a bid over $200 was received, it would automatically cancel out the mail bid. One point should be noted. An auctioneer pointed out that the scrupulous auctioneer would not submit a

mail bid for $200 on an item if the highest bid he could get from the crowd was, for example, $100. In this case, the honest auctioneer would bid perhaps $110 for the mail bidder, thus saving him ninety dollars.

Another valid elaboration on this rule is used by the owner of goods being sold. He may set minimum prices on items. These are called reserve prices. Thus, in effect, he says, "I have already bid X amount. In order to buy this item you must bid a greater amount." Thus, although the owner has bid outside the legal bidding segment, he has not broken the rule. If, though, the auction has been billed as an "absolute auction," this particular elaboration is invalidated. All items at an absolute sale must be sold to the highest bidder regardless of the price. Bidding outside the bidding segment (with the exception of mail bidding) is not allowed.

The use of the shill by the auctioneer is an example of an invalid and, if discovered, sanctionable elaboration of rule number six. The shill has arranged his bids with the auctioneer prior to the bidding segment. This usage is sanctionable because it removes the element of negotiation from bidding and replaces it with bidding direction or manipulation by the shill. The shill raises the bid when he feels it is low and buys an item if he can't raise the bid to a satisfactory and prearranged level. The owner, using a reserve price, would become a shill if he did not inform the crowd

of his stipulation and merely pretended to be a "normal" buyer.

If the auctioneer gives warning that he is about to end a bidding segment and that no further bids will be allowed under the rule, the bidder can use this warning to his best advantage. The following excerpt shows an MAS teacher cautioning his students to beware of giving bidders prior notice of the approaching end of bidding.

> . . . Forget that ending the sentence with all in all done, sold . . . . People only bid when you ask them for money. They don't bid on gravy, and then too you set a pattern, and in just a few minutes the audience knows that you're gonna say all in and all done before you sell it. So, consequently, a smart buyer will set there and will not bid at all until you say all in and all done, and then, he say "Yes!" and then you work awhile, and then ya say all in and all done and he says "yes." And suddenly they just killed you. A smart buyer just kills a guy who gets in a pattern of a certain deal before he sells out. That's why, if on the average run of the mill merchandise, you'll forget about the warning and you'll just go until they quit bidding and then . . . drop it right off on 'em. "I'm bid two fifty now seventy-five will ya give two seventy-five? Two fifty bid and now seventy-five? Sold it! Two fifty." That way they don't have a chance to wait you out, and they decide right then and there if you gonna buy from him you got to stay in there. And that's the action of the auction that you want.

7. A bidder making the initial bid on any item is expected to confine that bid within the guidelines of fair play. This rule might be called the "after all, we are all honest men" rule.

When making a first bid on an item the bidder must not bid either outrageously high or outrageously low. If the

bidder bids too low, for example, five dollars for a brass bed worth three hundred dollars (an occurrence not at all uncommon), he calls his own fairness into question. If, on the other hand, he bids too high, e.g., one hundred dollars for a box of rusted kitchen knives, he calls the auctioneer's contention that he is an honest man into question, for an honest man surely wouldn't intentionally cheat his bidders.

The following is an example of what can happen if too low a bid is received.

> All right, no chips and no cracks, and in pretty good shape, and signed on the bottom there. All right, what's your pleasure on 'em an go, send 'em in an roll. Hey to bid ten dollar bill, seven and a half, seven and a half, how much? Two dollars now three. You say two dollars? One dollar now two. On the bottom at a dollar bill ladies and gentlemen, let's go! (North Carolina auctioneer)

Although the auctioneer took the low starting bid, he was obviously not happy with it. (A further example of this rule can be seen in connection with rule number twenty.)

8. Each bid is to be viewed by the bidder as potentially the final bid of the interaction. The assumption of finality remains in effect unless and until a new bid is tendered by a different bidder.

There are no available elaborations of this rule. It can be noted with reference to rule number four, prohibiting sequential bids, that to place two of one's own bids next to one another would, in effect, also be saying that the first bid was not final. In doing this the bidder is calling into

question his own bidding judgement and the fairness of his bid.

9. Each bid may not only be final but may also, if final, be seen as a non-negotiable statement.

If, for example, a bidder bids ten dollars and that bid is followed by another bid of twelve dollars and fifty cents by a different bidder, and the first bidder replies with a bid of fifteen dollars the three bids, taken together, can be seen as a negotiation over final price. If, though, any one of the three had turned out to be the last bid, then, as the last bid its character would be transformed into a non-negotiable bid, i.e., a contract between bidder and auctioneer.

10. Although each bid is implicitly the statement "If this were my last bid, I would be willing to pay X amount," a bidder always has the option of changing his mind by submitting another "final" bid at a later time, and this, without losing face. Naturally, there must have been an intervening bid by another bidder. This rule only applies if indeed a bid does not actually turn out to be the final bid. If it does become the final bid, it is subject to rule number nine regarding non-negotiability.

Although each bid is theoretically a final bid, a bidder may make any number of bids on a given item. This differs radically from other situations of negotiation in which changing one's mind results in loss of face. For example, the prospective buyer of a used car makes what he says is

his final offer. If the seller refuses this offer, there is no deal. If, however, several days later the unsuccessful buyer calls the seller offering more money than he did in his "final offer," he has conceded to the seller and probably lost face in so doing. This is not the case at the auction. The changing of one's mind is integral to the auction process and does not constitute a concession either to the auctioneer or fellow bidders.

It should be noted that the ability of the bidder to submit numerous bids, as per the rules, is the basis for a major bidding strategy. A bidder may start very low in his bids and throw the competition off as to the degree of his desire to purchase an item. Then he may suddenly bid high. Alternatively, he may start out his bidding very high, thus making one bid that eliminates the competition immediately. Following this second practice, the bidder runs the risk of paying more for an item than if he had bid low and allowed competition. The bidder might also combine the two strategies during the sale of a single item, thus eliminating different persons from bidding at different times.

11. Any bid tendered by a bidder guarantees his ability to cover that bid if it becomes the final bid of the sequence.

This is not to say that a bidder may not bid higher than he intended to, but that he must have the money to cover his bids. Indeed, bidders often bid more than they wanted to originally. One auctioneer commented: "A lot of times a

bidder bids a lot more than he aims to--he gets carried away." (MAS teacher) This behavior is perfectly appropriate to the auction. But if he can't cover his bid, interactive breakdown would presumably result as it would in gambling. However, this has not actually been observed by the writer.

12. Collectively negotiated prices are to be viewed by participants as just and fair prices.

Once a price is arrived at through the bidding process, it may be regarded as the price that validly attaches to the item. Thus, for example, if an auctioneer is selling ten identical items he may auction off the first one, and, having set the price, he can then sell the other nine to anyone who wants them at the price set by the auction of the first one. This is a common occurrence and is readily accepted by both bidder and owner.

This same phenomenon can be seen to take place in a different variation. An auctioneer had several cases of motor oil to sell. He put the first one up for bid and sold it for eight dollars. All the other cases were put up separately for bid, and each one sold for eight dollars, regardless of the price the auctioneer started them at. One case was even started at seven dollars; he got the seven dollar bid with no trouble, but the case still only brought eight dollars. The price for that type of item had been negotiated to be eight dollars, and there it stayed.

Yet exceptions to this rule have been observed. Usually the exception occurs when an item is sold very cheap, due to audience inattention. When a like item comes up for bid many persons begin to bid hoping to get a bargain. This results in the item going for much more money than it originally did due to the increased competition.

This rule does not imply that persons will not be able to get items cheap at an auction or that they might not "get stuck." Rather, it means that once a price is negotiated it is the price of that item. More or less will not usually be given for similar items. The negotiated price becomes the selling price.

Rules Governing the Bidder's Relationship to the Item up for Sale

13. The bidder or prospective bidder must keep informed about what item is up for sale and what the bid on that item is at any time he intends to bid.

This rule is adhered to using one or more of the following methods: (a) A knowledgeable bidder will listen to the auctioneer's chant to determine the correct bid. The item up for sale can also be determined by listening to the auctioneer. (b) A bidder may discover the correct bid by listening to bidders who call out the amount they wish to bid and seeing if that bid is accepted by the auctioneer. (c) A bidder may, at any time, ask a fellow audience member what the bid is and what item is up for sale. This third

method is unreliable for discovering the correct bid for three reasons. First, it makes no direct reference to the auctioneer. Second, since the bid is constantly changing, a prospective bidder will fall behind the true bid between the time he asks the bid and the time he submits his own bid (perhaps a time lapse of only a few seconds). Third, there is no guarantee that the fellow audience member knows what is going on. There is a better chance of this third method succeeding if bidding is proceeding at a slow pace. The following observation shows how violation of the rule ensues in interactive breakdown, followed by remedial action to correct the error.

A woman was bidding on one item. In reality the item actually up for sale was a different item. She purchased the actual item up for sale still believing that she was buying a different item. When given the item she had actually purchased, she exclaimed somewhat weakly that she didn't intend to bid on or buy that item but a different item. The auctioneer did not hear her protest at which point her companion, visibly embarrassed, explained the situation. The auctioneer, somewhat peeved, put the item back up for sale.

14. The bidder must accept the item he has purchased regardless of its working or non-working condition. There are no returns, exchanges or warranties on the items he buys. Caveat emptor is an appropriate rubric for this rule.

It is the bidder's responsibility to examine articles

thoroughly before he bids on them. An auctioneer thus may preface his sale with words to the following effect:

> We sell this merchandise as it is. If we see a flaw in a piece that we're selling, we call your attention to it, otherwise you buy it as it is. Once you buy it, it's your responsibility to look after it. (North Carolina auctioneer)

This auctioneer was saying, in effect, that he would volunteer some information about an item up for sale, but one shouldn't depend on him for the information, and, if he didn't say anything, it did not mean that the item was in perfect condition.

When an auctioneer does volunteer information about an item it often takes the form of praise rather than the identification of flaws.

> All right, a nice piece of cut patterned glass there, nice one. What's you pleasure on 'em and go. Your pleasures mine, no cracks and no chips.
>
> There's your nice figurine. What's you pleasure on 'em and go, send 'em in an roll. No cracks or chips. How about telling me about this stuff (this said to his ringman). If it's in A-1 shape tell it so we can tell the public they can bid faster and know what they're gettin.

To protect himself the bidder may sometimes elaborate the rule by demanding that the auctioneer give a full disclosure of the condition of a particular item at the time it comes up for sale. If this is done by the bidder, the burden of responsibility shifts to the auctioneer. He becomes responsible. If, in this situation, an item is not all that any bidder expected it to be, he may return it, thus voiding both his bid and his purchase.

15. If rule number fourteen is ignored and items are purchased that are not what one hoped or wanted, they should be accepted and any inadequacies ignored or joked about. This rule might be entitled the "all in good fun" assumption.

The auction occurs as a sociable occasion. It cannot be seen solely as an economic activity but equally as a play activity. Even the economic aspects of the situation have what seems to be an inordinate amount of social determination. This all in good fun aspect of the auction can be seen in the context of Simmel's analytic distinction between the serious forms of interaction, its reality, and the sociable forms. (Simmel: 40) The auction, in this sense, can be seen as dichotomous. First, it has its serious goal oriented forms; that of the making of money or the acquiring of needed goods. Secondly, it has its sociable forms, its play aspect. It is in this guise that the rule now under consideration has sway. As a sociable occasion things are not to be taken "all that seriously." After all it is not the obtaining of goods that is of importance, but the love of the chase. The enjoyment of jockeying for the winning bid is, in and of itself, to be seen as satisfying. One auctioneer pointed out that many people are impulse buyers, especially on antiques and furniture. To encourage impulse buying the auctioneer encourages excitement and enthusiasm about what he is selling. This auctioneer added that people want an item when they see that the crowd also wants it.

The sociable element of the auction can be seen especially in the way that buyers react to goods they do not really want. At an auction this researcher observed in Connecticut, a woman purchased what was described as an antique washtub stand with cast iron fittings. Upon obtaining the item she realized that she had absolutely no use for the item and said so in a joking manner. She even went so far as to ask (still smiling and joking) if anybody seated around her would like to purchase the item from her for the same price she had just paid. Realizing she had no takers, she turned her attention to the washtub stand and began joking about all the various uses she might find for it.

Rules Governing the Person of the Bidder

16. Bidders are whom they purport themselves to be. This rule will be called the rule of authenticity.

This rule was rarely observed to be elaborated on, and most elaborations would, in all likelihood, result in interactive breakdown. Thus, if a bidder turned out to be in the employ of the auctioneer as a shill, both shill and auctioneer would immediately be sanctioned in some fashion. Auctioneers were reluctant even to talk about the use of the shill.

One elaboration of this rule is illustrated by the following incident:

> Hey, a dollar bill do ya want it? Will ya give one dollar for it? Will ya give one? Will ya bid one? Will ya go one dollar for it? Will ya give one-- I'll take that one for one dollar, put that one to me. I need to buy somethin anyway. (North Carolina auctioneer)

The auctioneer who bought an item himself was not sanctioned since he had re-declared himself as a bidder. He was not attempting any deception or fraudulent manipulation.

Ringmen have also been observed to elaborate this rule by bidding on items themselves. This is a more common elaboration than the above one but still requires the same visibility. The ringman must audibly declare his intentions to the crowd to assume the role of bidder validly.

17. Bodily movements which in most situations one is free to make and which usually go unnoticed are restricted to time periods lying outside of the actual bidding segment. Pulling one's ear, winking, scratching one's head, waving one's hand at a friend or at a fly provide instances of such movements.

During a bidding segment such movements could easily be interpreted as a bid and are therefore strictly limited. An example:

> . . . And I got six dollars will ya gimme a seven, did you say seven, eight, get your hand down I'll take ya. Will ya go seven? Six dollars will ya go seven? Six dollars will ya go seven?

Although the adherence to this rule is strict, the real sanctions that attach to its breakage amount to no more than what happened to the above bidder, perhaps embarrassment. One auctioneer confessed that it was a myth that a bidder could make a movement mistake and "end up owning a $20,000 tractor, that just doesn't happen, the bidder will just say I wasn't

bidding." Nevertheless the myth does exist. Auction participants appear to believe that if they do make a false move they might end up owning an unwanted item. The consequence is that the auction can progress smoothly.

Rules and Elaborations Governing the Behavior of Auctioneers at the Country Auction

18. An auctioneer must present the item up for sale for all crowd members to see. The item must be presented honestly.

Although the rule of caveat emptor in most instances does place the burden of responsibility on the bidder, the auctioneer is assumed not to deceive intentionally. For the most part elaboration of this rule involves the auctioneer's "oversight" of damage in the articles he sells. A second, and perhaps more interesting, elaboration is the way that auctioneers use the presentation of especially damaged goods to help them sell those goods. Thus, they might cry the following:

> Here's a cracked crock. Everybody needs a crock. What a ya give for it. It'll have a little first aid in there. What a ya give for it. Anybody need the pot . . . . (North Carolina auctioneer)

or perhaps:

> Alpine china, (cries the ringman) I don't know whether that's alpine china or not but somebody take a big bite out of somethin there (the auctioneer explained that the dish had a large hunk missing) There must of been a good pie on

> it. Now people, this thing here is busted but it's a souvenir compliments of S. Hudson and Co. in Pomona, North Carolina. It's dated 1914. It's a shame that chip's gone out of it. We're gonna sell ya the whole thing, the whole thing. If ya get a bad deal ya can go home . . . and forget about it. All right what'll ya give . . . . (North Carolina auctioneer)

(For one more example of this see the final example listed under rule number nineteen.)

Usually an item is presented without ceremony or rule elaboration. Such a presentation is usually short with an emphasis on the quality of the item up for sale. For example, "All right here's an old teapot, what a ya give for the teapot? It's up for sale anybody interested?" is characteristic. In this example the term "old" was used to describe the item. At the country auction the term "old" and its synonyms, e.g., antique, old un, are by far the most common descriptive adjectives, and the quality, oldness, is by far the best, most saleable, attribute any item can possess.

19. The auctioneer must impart to all goods he sells an apparent intrinsic monetary worth and convey that worth to his crowd.

In order to sell everything, as is his responsibility to the owner, his employer, the auctioneer gives even junk some monetary worth. One auctioneer commented the following in connection with the items he sells: "Ya gotta create a desire for 'em . . . act like its the best thing in the world, no matter what it is." (MAS teacher)

It would be inappropriate for the auctioneer to comment that he was, as it were, peddling junk to his crowd. This rule is basically the auctioneer's statement of responsibility to the owner, saying in effect, "I will sell everything you have charged me with selling." To carry out this responsibility the auctioneer must devise ways of presenting "junk" in such a manner that it becomes pleasing or interesting to prospective buyers. Thus, an auctioneer might say:

> All right, lookee here, we go a whole bunch, it's all this. And I don't know what all. Hey! I got a whole box full of em--get right in, what'll we give for 'em. Table clothes--plastic and cloth. Hey all right, two dollar bill we get right in. (North Carolina auctioneer)

or:

> All right the first item is up for sale. What a ya want to give for it? (The auctioneer asks aside to his ringman what he has for sale.) Whole box full one money here addin machine an all, box full of stuff, whadaya want a give for it right quick and let's go, what a ya want a give for it. Got a addin machine in there too. Show the addin machine (to ringman). How much you say for it? Hey, I got a half a dollar. (North Carolina auctioneer)

Perhaps after sales pitches like this the auctioneer may not be successful in creating a desire on the part of the audience large enough to instigate a monetary bid from them. In that event he may combine the unsold item with the next item up for sale. Thus, if an item cannot be invested with intrinsic value, it will achieve value via association. In reality the auctioneer is breaking the rule by not actually obtaining money for every item, but the following technique is a valid elaboration.

> Lookee here, here's a pitcher, a water pitcher. Little crack in it. Big crack, goes all the way down to the bottom. We didn't see it. What'll ya give for the crack, it's up for sale? (pause) Throw this jug in with it. What a ya give for two for one money? Old water jug. Two for one money. What a ya give for both of 'em? Anybody interested in 'em. Give us something else. Give us something else please please please! Put that measure. Putem right in there and we'll sell 'em all. All right what a ya give for 'em, all of 'em? The o'l measure and two jugs. What a ya give for the whole thing? Up for sale, what a ya give for it? Anybody interested in it? Tape measure, what a ya give for it? (bidding starts) (North Carolina auctioneer)

20. An auctioneer must request an initial bid from his crowd on any given item and is understood to accept any initial bid he is offered.

This rule is essential to any auction. A bidder may submit any bid and the auctioneer is bound to accept it, but it is a rule especially prone to elaboration. As was seen in rule number seven, the bidder is expected to submit an "honest" bid. If a bidder breaks rule seven, the auctioneer is freed to elaborate the present rule. In the following example the auctioneer did not accept a bid and was not sanctioned for it. The item up for sale, a blue back speller, is commonly known to be a significant collector's item.

> All right ladies an gentlemen, here is one of the best. It's in mint condition, this is the old elementary spelling book, the blue back speller you've heard so much about at the auctions. We've sold these things for on up in the money. Here is one, it is in mint condition, it's up for sale, whata'll ya give for it and let's go? Who'll give me twenty-five dollars and let's go? I've got a good little lady over here with a mean offer. (laughter) (The lady bid one dollar.) All right,

> how much? How much? What will you give? Somebody give me a start. I've got five, now ten. (The five dollars was not from the original lady whose bid was refused.) (North Carolina auctioneer)[1]

However, on most occasions the auctioneer must forego elaborating the rule and accept a bid that appears outrageously low.

> All right how much for the rocker, send em in here and roll. Let's roll it ladies and gentlemen because the faster we sell out the faster we get done. All right, send 'em in here and roll, what's your pleasure on 'em and go. Hey to bid, twenty dollar,bid, twenty dollar bid, fifteen, twenty dollar, fifteen, ten, how much would your give? Would you give five, hey to bid five dollar bid, will ya give five? Hey to bid five dollar bid will ya give five, anybody give five dollars, five dollars, that be made into a good rocker there, would ya give five dollars? Hey to bid five dollar bid, will ya give five? Five dollar bid would ya give five? Well I got a good man and a mean offer at a dollar bill. Now two . . . (North Carolina auctioneer)

In this case there was no strongly established agreement between auctioneer and bidders concerning the item's worth. A refusal of a bid by the auctioneer could have resulted in sanctions against him in the form of an angry, and therefore

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[1]Another example of a refused bid resulting in a successful elaboration of rule number twenty. "Hey, and what do ya want to give for this doll? Right quick an let's go. What do ya want a give for it? Give me something, I don't have anything but the doll. How much will ya give for it? A Kennedy doll. Hey bid your pleasure for it. What do ya wanna give for it? Your bid's mine. Gimme something right quick, what da ya want to give for it? (Twenty-five cents is bid.) How much? No sir, we're taking less then a fifty cent bid please. (Same woman bids fifty cents.) Fifty cents, an now one dollar, now would you go fifty." This item was finally sold for fifty dollars, at which point the auctioneer jokingly concluded saying, "That was a long chase wasn't it?"

non-buying, crowd.

The reason behind an auctioneer's attempt to bend this rule by not accepting low bids is as follows. If a very low bid is accepted, for example, ten dollars on a one thousand dollar item, then the auctioneer may encounter difficulty in reaching his goal of achieving value for an item. Generally, auctioneers have two contingent strategies for dealing with a first bid. If the bid is very low an auctioneer can accept it, start low, and "get a good run, a lot of excitement, and action" in attempting to reach his goal. If a good high first bid is obtained, then the strategy is to "start high and be done with it." The second strategy is seemingly preferred with several auctioneers stating that they liked to get a a first bid of at least half the "true" value of the item. Keeping this in mind, it can be seen why the auctioneer often prefers to "set the item in," as follows, rather than simply to ask the crowd to volunteer a bid on their own. In this way he minimizes the risk of having to reject a low bid:

> All right we got a nice telephone. We got fifty to start it. Now seventy-five. Seventy-five now a hundred dollars seventy-five will you give a hundred dollars? (North Carolina auctioneers)

21. An auctioneer must accept bids from any and all interested, and bidding, persons in the crowd.

Although it is to his benefit, an auctioneer is not required to accept mail bids or phone bids prior to the auction. But once a bidder is present, he is entitled to have his "proper" bid conforming to the rules of bidding accepted. The

auctioneer is therefore responsible for scanning the crowd to spot bids being called in. To help in this he frequently uses ringmen. If the auctioneer fails somehow in carrying out this rule by failing to spot bidders who feel they have done all in their power to be recognized, then he runs the risk of losing them as bidders.

There is one elaboration that is frequently accepted by the audience and is employed by auctioneers. One auctioneer describes it as follows: "If you get two guys a biddin you stay right with these two. Keep the others in the corner of your eye. Then, when one of the two quits, then, look around for other bidders." This is what happens when two persons seem determined to win an item. One bids, then the other, then the first, then the other, back and forth until one drops out. In this situation the auctioneer is allowed selective inattention to the rest of the crowd. One explanation for this is that crowd members watch such bidding duels with great interest and momentarily lose interest in all else.

22. After receiving his first bid on an item an auctioneer must ask for increasing bids in uniform increments.

Thus, if an auctioneer gets a first bid of $3.50 and then, by chanting, asks the bidders to bid $4.00, the bidders would expect him to ask for $4.50 after receiving $4.00. One auctioneer stated in an interview that students ". . . should stay with one progression, one half or one quarter ($ .50 or

$ .25), if he switches around bidders will get angry."[2] If an auctioneer does not use uniform increments bidders become subject to feelings of inequality causing anger and interactive breakdown may ensue. These feelings stem from the perception that one bidder was allowed into the bidding group unfairly. He may have bid only fifty cents, while another bid one dollar to get in. When one considers that all bids may be final bids, it is unfair to cause one bidder to have to bid more than another bidder to have his bid accepted.

Auctioneers universally manipulate this rule to enhance their position. One method of calling bids is called the ten-fifteen method and is marginally admissable as a uniform increment method. The following explains the method and shows how it almost broke down an auction bidding segment because one bidder says it is perhaps an improper rule elaboration.

> Now then, I use the ten-fifteen method of selling altogether. I don't care what I'm selling, I use the ten-fifteen method rather than the straight ten method. It gets you there two bids quicker. It gets you to a hundred two bids quicker than if you went on straight tens . . . . It always has to be

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[2] In their handbook for auctioneers the Missouri Auction School lists the various uniform increment progressions that are commonly used. They are: 5-10-15-20-25-etc., 10-20-30-40-etc., 1-2-3-4-5-etc., $1\frac{1}{2}$-2-$2\frac{1}{2}$-3-$3\frac{1}{2}$-4-$4\frac{1}{2}$-etc., 1-$1\frac{1}{4}$-$1\frac{1}{2}$-$1\frac{3}{4}$-2-etc., ($\frac{3}{4}$ is usually said seventy-five in the chant, thus this progression would sound this way: one, one and a quarter, one and a half, seventy-five, two), 20-$22\frac{1}{2}$-25-$27\frac{1}{2}$-30-etc., 10-25-35-50-60-75-etc., 100-125-150-175-200-etc.

> in that sequence, ten and then fifteen, ten and then fifteen, ten and then fifteen, for example: I'm bid one ten now twenty-five, will ya go thirty-five and now fifty, fifty now sixty now seventy-five bid one seventy-five and now eighty-five, now two hundred. And nobody will object. And you've got eight bids that did the job for ten bids if you went on straight tens . . . . I've never had but one man object to the ten-fifteen method. I had a buyer at one sale and it seemed like always he was gettin in on the fifteen dolar raise (laughter). And he looked up there, he knew that he was, he looked up there and said, 'Hey, Colonel, how about gettin me on in ten dollar jumps once in a while.' (MAS teacher)

Although the auctioneer must proceed uniformly, not any and all increments, are acceptable under the rule. The following excerpt from a drill session at the MAS shows how a student erred in his increments. The teacher auctioneer explains the mistake:

> You didn't know what you were going to go for after you left ten. Fifteens next, or elevens next. Twenty is not next from a ten dollar start. Never is a hundred per cent raise in order. Why should you pay a hundred per cent for the privilege of putting a bid on from the starting price? If it was started at a right kind of a price, you don't see them start a car at six hundred, and the next bid is twelve hundred do you? You don't see them start a farm at five hundred an acre and the next bid is a thousand an acre. And so you've got these percentages or the amounts of a raise kind a in your mind. Actually any time you can get a ten per cent raise every bid that is a good raise. Now that is not true in the case of starting an article at a dollar. At a dollar you could certainly go to a dollar and a quarter which would be a twenty-five per cent raise. But a twenty-five per cent raise is a tremendous raise in any phase of the auction business, if it was started at the right kind of a price. Now, if it was started at a ridiculously low price, then, you could ask for more money and maybe get it.

Generally, this rule can be seen as helping to create an equality among bidders. It is used by the auctioneer, however, to control the speed of their bidding in relation to the monetary goal of the auctioneer.

23. An auctioneer must accept any bid regardless of whether it conforms to his asked increment or not.

An auctioneer, as stated in rule twenty-two, is required to ask for bids uniformly. Despite this, the bidder is not required to submit bids that conform to an auctioneer's increment. Thus, the auctioneer must accept any and all bids after the initial bid has started things off. In auctioneer argot a bid of a smaller increment than the auctioneer's asking increment is called a "cut bid." Bidders who consistently try to cut an auctioneer's increment down to what the auctioneer feels is an unfairly low level are referred to as "bastards."

The most important, and universally accepted, elaboration on this rule is the auctioneer's privilege to set a minimum bid. At the country auction this usually amounts to twenty-five cents but is sometimes fifty cents. The following illustrates this elaboration (the minimum in this example happened to be five dollars, an exception to the usual practice):

> I never tell people that I've got a minimum raise until I need to, and only then if someone tried to give me less than the minimum that I would accept. And then I just simply do it in this manner. Let's say that five is the minimum I'm gonna take . . . . 'And I'm bid seventy-five and now eighty dollars on 'em.' And you come in with seventy-six, I'll just say 'Sir five's the minimum.' I'll just tell you right there 'Five's the minimum. I got seventy-five

> and now eighty dollars on 'em, you wanna give eighty.' And if he don't do it why I'll sell that for seventy-five. (MAS teacher)

Auctioneers many times try to soften the blow when they inform bidders of the minimum. Like the previous one, the following auctioneer refrains from informing the crowd outright of a minimum bid and only mentions it when it becomes necessary. "If somebody bids too small an amount, say a dime try saying, 'I'll loan you the fifteen cents.'" (MAS teacher)

Sometimes rather than informing the bidder of the minimum the auctioneer will go so far as to ignore his low bid and put him on at the minimum bid instead.

> You know sometimes you got ten and a quarter or you you want ten and a quarter, and some guy offers you a dime, and you don't see him. Don't stop and say 'What was that bid sir?' Hell, just take it as a quarter or a dollar, whatever you was a cryin and go on. If you don't get another bid, I'll guarantee you when you sell out to him he'll tell ya.

It should be noted that according to this rule most cut bids must be accepted as long as they are not less than the minimum bid. Thus, if an auctioneer is calling his bids in ten dollar increments and a bidder cuts him by bidding only five dollars, he must accept that five dollar bid. The only exception to this occurs when the auctioneer has many people interested and bidding on an item. If this is the case and someone offers a cut bid, he may ignore it if another bidder is ready at hand with a bid that conforms to his increment.

In connection with this rule one last comment is in order. The question naturally comes up as to why bidders would allow

the auctioneer to elaborate the rule by setting a minimum bid. An auctioneer at the MAS explained this by asking, "What if you as a bidder had bid one thousand dollars? How would you feel if the auctioneer took a bid for one thousand and one dollars?" He went on to say "I wouldn't sell you out for a dollar." One can imagine how interminable the auction would be if the auctioneer accepted such absurdly small increments as penny bids.

24. An auctioneer is to accept one and only one bid at a time from a single bidder.

For example, if a bidder bids ten dollars, the auctioneer is restrained from putting that bidder on at ten dollars and also at twelve dollars. (Refer to rule number four.)

As applied to the auctioneer this rule is absolute and cannot be elaborated on by an auctioneer without sanctions. In the same way that the shill is not mentioned to the non-initiated, the breaking of this rule is also hushed up. When an auctioneer does break the rule and accepts sequential bids from the same bidder, it is termed "running the bid." Here is an example of how it works:

> I'll show you what happens, ya know they talk about auctioneers runnin the bids on people. Talk about auctioneers ya know they say that guy really runs the bid on ya. Well, I'm not sayin that they do or don't. I'm just leavin it there. An I'm not sayin how it's done. It's done because after all an auctioneer is human and he can only stand so much temptation. Mortals can only stand so much temptation. And so you put too much temptation in front of 'em and he's liable to break. Ya know the devil made him do it or somethin. So what

> really gets you in trouble, you as a buyer, what really gets you in trouble is the way you bid. If you want an auctioneer to run you and bounce bids off the wall and really wrack you up, the way you bid is what'll do it. And here's what happens. The guy is what I call the big wheel. You've all seen him at an auction. Here's the big wheel he raises his hand, he wants everybody to know, 'I'm mister big wheel I bid.' Well I don't ever want to be a big wheel because you know what dogs do to wheels . . . . Because that's what will happen to you as a big wheel at an auction. And here's how it happens. Let's say we're going twenty-five dollars a lick on this cow, and here's old big wheeler back there in right field and he raises his hand. All right, the auctioneer already sees him. Let's say we're at five hundred. The auctioneer sees him out of the corner of his eye and big wheel starts up with his hand. So that's 'Five and a quarter, fifty, seventy-five, gimme six hundred, now twenty-five, gimme eight hundred on him, ya wanna give me eight hundred now twenty-five,' and by the time big wheel decides to take his hand down it's 'Eight twenty-five, gimme fifty, now seventy-five, gottcha, eight seventy-five, now nine hundred.' It only cost him three hundred seventy-five dollars . . . because he kept his hand up. He was being the big wheel. I would do that all day. But. (much laughter) (MAS teacher)[3]

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[3]Another example of how an auctioneer might take more than one bid from a person in violation of rule number twenty-four is as follows: "I've got a friend who's a big wig dealer, thinks he is. And he told me . . . . 'I'll tell you the way I bid. I just tell the auctioneer to watch me and when I've got my hat pulled down over my eyes kinda, I want him to keep me in, and when I don't want in any more I push my hat back on my head.' And I said Ho Ho Ho Ho Ho, Ho Ho Ho Ho! I said, 'You have been screwed so many times at an auction you have got no idea how you have been hooked at an auction by doing that.' Well good lord! A man could keep that hat down on his head and as soon as he pulled it down once you could run money fast as you can run money until he pushed it back, and you could grab him as he was pushin it back and put him on." (MAS teacher) When this auctioneer says at the end of his story that you can put him on, he means that once he has run the money up on this guy the auctioneer would call one final bid that would be his. This guy would probably end up buying the item because his was the last bid accepted.

The writer had never actually observed this rule being broken. If an auctioneer were to be caught breaking it, the action would almost certainly completely break down.

25. The auctioneer must include in the bid calling chant all required information, i.e., the bid and the asked bid. To do this he must at all time be aware of the amount just bid and the next amount to be asked for as dictated by his uniform increment sequence.

The following chant strictly adheres to the rule:

> And a three dollar bill. Will ya give three dollars? Will ya go three to bid three dollars? Will ya go three dollars? Will ya go three dollars? Will ya go three? What's your pleasure, two dollar bill ya want it? Now three? Will ya go three dollars? Two dollars. Will ya gimme a half? Two dollars. Will ya gimme a half? . . . A half and now three. Will ya go three? Three dollars and now a half will ya gimme a half on three dollars? Will ya gimme a quarter? Will ya gimme a quarter? Three dollars will ya gimme a quarter? Three dollars will ya gimme a quarter? Will ya gimme a quarter? Three will ya gimme a quarter? Sold it to ya Spencer, three dollar bill! (North Carolina auctioneer)

The following example illustrates what can happen if the auctioneer loses track of the bids during his chant.

> Five dollars I got, now seven a half, seven a half, seven a half. Ya give seven a half? Seven a half, seven a half, seven a half, will ya go seven a half? To bid seven a half? Seven a half, five I got. Seven a half, seven a half, seven a half anybody seven a half? Seven a half, seven a half, now twelve dollars, eight dollars, eight, eight, eight, eight, ya give eight? (North Carolina auctioneer)[4]

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[4]Here is an example of some student auctioneers losing track of the bid at the Missouri Auction School.

This auctioneer started off his bidding by asking for seven and a half dollars. He was bid five from the audience, and then he asked for seven and a half. After getting this he made a mistake by asking for twelve instead of ten as dicataed by his uniform increments. This auctioneer even compounded the error by correcting himself incorrectly by then asking for eight.

In certain cases, especially if confronted by knowledgeable bidders, the auctioneer may cut out certain information in his chant. Thus he might say, "I got three dollars, who'll give my fifty? now fifty, who'll go fifty? Three dollars, who'll give me three fifty?" In this case the auctioneer left off what is called the "stem" or "handle" until the end. The stem is the three dollars he has bid. In calling the bid he asked for fifty rather than the three fifty. The auctioneer assumed that the crowd knew he was on three dollars and not three hundred dollars.

An auctioneer at the MAS related this story. It shows

Student: "I'm bid forty-two dollars now a quarter, now I hear a quarter anywhere? Sold it your way forty-one dollars."
Teacher: "How much?"
Student: "Forty-one seventy-five. Forty-two dollars."
Teacher: "Right!"

.....

Teacher: "(start at) Forty-five."
Student: "Forty-five now a quarter, forty-five now a quarter, forty-five now a quarter, now a half, now a seventy-five, now seventy-five, now forty-two."
Teacher: "Want to start again?"

how, if the elaboration of leaving off the stem is carried too far, it becomes a threat to the auction.

> . . . I just pull in to see a pony sale. And they had a big loudspeaker going and I got in to the parking lot. I heard the auctioneer say, the auctioneer said. 'Eighty dollar bid, and now five. Eighty dollar bid, and now five will you give me eighty-five? Now boys I'm gonna sell 'er if don't. I got eighty dollar and now five.' I parked my car, walked into the auction arena, he started up again and said, 'eighty dollar bid and now five, will you give eighty-five for 'em?' And I thought, 'Holy hell, eighty dollars is all he's got on that pony?' I knew there was surely something in front of it. And he stopped and made another talk. And then he started up again and said, 'I got eighty dollar now five will ya give me eighty-five? I'm gonna sell 'er . . . . I got eighty dollars now five. Eighty dollar bid and now five, will ya give me five for her? Sold her! Four hundred and eighty dollars.'

26. The auction proceeds at the speed with which bids are received. Bidding speed is seen to be in the hands of the bidder. The auctioneer merely asks for bids.

Although it is "understood" that the bidder is in control of the course of the auction since without his bidding there <u>is</u> no auction, the auctioneer develops elaborations that enable him covertly to affect how and when bids are turned in by bidders. If generally known to bidders, these tactics would not break down the interaction, for these elaborations are considered valid. The auctioneer is permitted to use fair tactics to gain his ends. One auctioneer related that when he solicits bids he tries to do the following:

> Now let me give you a little pointer. They don't tell you in there, they don't anyplace else, and you'll find it. The more confused you get the crowd, in terms of their bidding, the faster your gonna go, the more money your gonna get. And I don't mean on which article they're bidding on, I mean confused on what they're bidding. Your movin it fast, O.K. Your ringman's holdin that piece up, if he can. Or your sellin that furniture. And as you go through you make sure that they know what your biddin on, O.K. Now Saturday night, last Saturday night . . . we got . . . a regular cabinet . . . you can sell for ten bucks anyplace in the country just about . . . all right. The dam thing brought twenty-two and a half. We got three ringmen yellin, O.K. And I started it at a dollar bill just to get it started. And the next thing we know it's sold. And a gal, 'Did I buy that finally?' And that's all she said. Sounds funny. But there a lot of sellers, at sales, like that. O.K., you gotta move it fast . . . we've found . . . the quicker you can move it the faster they'll bid. The slower you go, and give them time to think, the slower they're going to go. (MAS teacher)

In this context the reader should also refer back to the ten-fifteen method of selling as another method used to influence the speed at which bidders bid.[5]

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[5]Here is an example of an instructor at the MAS giving instruction in the manipulation of bid calling to increase auction speed. "Here's a type of bid calling that can be used when the bidding is rapid, and it is used quite a lot by auctioneers to create enthusiasm. And once we've begun an article, say at one hundred and fifty dollars, you'll notice how this explosive bid calling becomes effective because you not only increase your value you increase the speed, and it's just a little bit different rhythm than you would normally use in your chant. 'All right what will you give for 'em. Selling the good Duroc boar, and how many dollars on 'em? One fifty. Will you give one fifty any more now one and a half will you give one fifty? All right, will you give one fifty for 'em? One fifty? One and a quarter, thank you now fifty. I'm bid one an a quarter will you give one fifty? Anymore now one and a half, will you give one fifty? . . . One fifty. Now sixty. I'm bid one

At the Missouri Auction School the element of speed is greatly emphasized as a way to control the bidding in the auctioneer's favor. Tongue twisters are repeatedly rehearsed as a method of learning to chop off parts of words to give a staccato effect, in the words of one teacher, the "illusion of speed." Auctioneers were constantly saying words to this point: "Main thing is to keep these auctions moving," "Can't let his chant drag," or "Auction means action." Thus, although the bidder may feel in control of the situation, the auctioneer is constantly maneuvering him into a position where he momentarily loses control of his bidding.

One auctioneer pointed out that this rule can also be skillfully manipulated by the knowledgeable bidder. He said, "Some folks will pretend they don't understand just to slow it (the chant) down." This enables the bidder to retain a tighter control of his bidding.

27. An auctioneer must sell an item. regardless of its final price, to the highest bidder.

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fifty will you give sixty? One and a half and now sixty . . . now sixty will you give sixty, five, five, now seventy, now five, now eighty for 'em. I go one sev--Yes! Eighty! Now five any more now eighty-five to want em, I'm bid one eighty now five . . . eighty-five. One eighty now five. Five and now at eighty-five, do you want 'em at eighty-five. Ninety now five now two hundred dollars on 'em. I'm bid one ninety-five now two. Don't lose 'em. Ninety-five now two thank you now, five, do ya want em. I'm bid two hundred, now five, anybody give two five for 'em? I'm bid two hundred now five, you wanna give two five any more, and all through, two hundred. Two five? All in? All done? You wanna give two five? I've sold 'em to ya at two hundred."

In auctioneer argot when an item is sold it is "knocked down" to a bidder. Any item on which a bid is accepted must be sold to a legal bidder, not to a shill or anyone in the employ of the owner or auctioneer. A normal sale is exemplified by any of the following. In each one the item was sold according to the rule.

> Five dollars now a half. Five dollars, you bid half bid half, will you go five and a half? Five dollar you bid half, bid half, bid half, will you go five and a half? Five dollar you bid a half? Ya all in? Ya all done? Will ya give five and a half? An sell it, five dollars to number ten.
>
> Three dollars bid half bid half, will you go three and a half? Mighty cheap ladies and gentlemen. If you done, I am. Will you give three and a half? Three dollar bid half bid half, will you go three and a half? Once, twice, three times and rollem three dollars out yonder. (Both taken from North Carolina auctioneer.)

One valid elaboration discussed in connection with rule number six is the reserve price. But even when the auctioneer declares that some items will not necessarily be sold to the highest bidder but according to the reserve price, he often still pays lip service to this rule. This example illustrates such lip service:

> . . . There may be one or two items that we might have to put a restriction on, I hope not, but, if we do, we reserve the right to do it. Because we don't have any by-bidders (bidders bidding for the owner). And we're, we're trying to run a straight sale here. And what we put up for sale we gonna sell it. Unless we specify otherwise . . . . This is your sale now, you put a bid on it and we'll go from there, and when we stop somebody will own it. (North Carolina auctioneer)

As far as the writer can determine this is the only valid elaboration available on this rule, i.e., the publicly stated reserve price. Because an incorrect elaboration can easily lead to the auctioneer's being discredited, it is frequently the practice to emphasize adherence to the rule during the auction.

> All right ladies and gentlemen. Right over there is your dresser. What kind a wood is that? (said to his ringman) All right it has a marble front there. Walt, ya think it's walnut? I didn't look at it. All right ladies and gentlemen send 'em here and roll. Forty dollars hey to bid forty . . . . Will ya give thirty-five? . . . Anybody twenty dollars and let's go from there. An that be the bottom, twenty dollars I'm bid, now thirty . . . . Hey thirty dollar bid will ya give five? . . . Thirty-five will ya give seven and a half? . . . Now forty dollar bid . . . thirty-seven and a half, will ya give thirty-eight? Ya all in all done? Mighty cheap. Thirty-eight now thirty-nine . . . ladies and gentlemen a walnut piece right there that thing should be bringin seventy dollars. You're here but we here to sell it. Thirty-eight dollars is all I'm bid on it but when I get done it's sold. So I'm hired to come here today and sell this merchandise and I'm gonna sell it. That's my motto. Thirty-eight will ya give thirty-nine. I'm not asking you to take my reputation. Thirty-nine now forty . . . ya all in, ya all done? Will ya give forty dollars? Once, forty dollars now one . . . will ya go one. It's still cheap . . . forty-one now two. Forty-one go two now three . . . . Forty-two will ya give three? . . . Forty-three now four . . . now five, forty-five. Hey forty-five, will ya go six . . . forty-six, will ya go seven? . . . Roll it forty-six dollars. Now ladies and gentlemen, if I make a little speech once in a while, I sell this stuff very often on handling estates. I'm not trying to pull your leg when I stop and make a speech, but the piece sold cheap. But like I said I'm hired to come here and sell, and that's my motto, when I put it up I sell it. (North Carolina auctioneer)

This next example illustrates an incorrect elaboration that would probably result in interactive breakdown if discovered by bidders. The question was asked by an MAS student concerning what happens if an item does not bring a high enough price.

> I charge it to a house number if you have numbers . . . if you're selling by numbers, using the number method, and there is any of this gonna be done have a house number . . . . When you sign in and get your numbers your bidding number, pull out one or two bidding numbers and nobody gets them. Like number four and number nine, so if you don't get the price that it's got to bring... fifty dollars, that's what it's got to bring. If I start it at fifty, it's not going to go because we've started it so close to the money we've eliminated the action of the auction. So I'll say 'Well all right who'll give seventy-five dollars on 'em? Well fifty then. I'm bid thirty-five and now forty.' You see I've started it at thirty-five, it's gotta bring fifty. 'Thirty-five and now forty.' If I get a live one in, 'Forty dollars, now five, forty-five now! Fifty.' And if you hit me at fifty then I'm on the ground, I can go, if it doesn't bring more. But, if you don't come in an the forty-five is out of the air, then, 'Sold it, number nine gets it, forty-five dollars.' Number nine's a house number. It did not sell. Clerk doesn't give you away. Nobody gives you away . . . . It's done all over, so whether you like it or not it's an occasional deal that you gonna have to do, so you just as well learn how to do it. (MAS teacher)

The instructor pointed out that items could be protected also by having an actual employee bidding from the crowd. He disclaimed that this was a shill but called it a protector. In any case, the following illustrates how exposure of this tactic could ruin a sale. This story was related by a Missouri auctioneer:

> 'I want to sell every cow in the auction but one. This cow right here, number so and so, I don't want to sell her . . . but I put her in the auction anyway . . . .' (owner) And I (auctioneer) said, "Well you would sell her at some price." And he said 'Yea but if she don't bring X number of dollars,' I'm gonna say three hundred here, 'But if she don't bring three hundred dollars we're not gonna let her go." And I (auctioneer) said, "Now all right are you sure? That is your very low dollar, three hundred?" 'Yes sir, three hundred is the low dollar.' So I crank up and here I go and I ask for three fifty and ask for three hundred, and I kick her in at like two hundred and I hit her two and a quarter, and I'm trying to get a live one in. Nobody come in but there still showin some interest so finally I hit her two fifty and then ask for sixty and nobody still came in, and about that time the owner got up and said, 'Colonel just go ahead and sell her, I changed my mind, didn't want to keep her. Just go ahead an sell her.' Who in the hell am I gonna sell her to? I'm in a pickle. So I said, I wasn't gonna get any more, so I said, "Sold her two fifty." He said, 'Who got it.' I said, "The man right out . . . ." He said, 'Wait a minute that guy works for me.' He had changed his mind, had a change of heart. Suddenly he wanted to sell the cow. Well, I just said, "No, it's all over, that's it. Thank you folks . . . ." It was the last cow in the auction so it wouldn't really hurt anything. Now if it had been up in the front of the auction, and he had said no sale, it would have hurt the whole sale.

28. An auctioneer may not accept further bids on an item after he has said "sold" or its equivalent.

"You shouldn't open up a sale again after you say 'sold.' Sometimes bidders will tolerate it, but don't do it too much." (MAS teacher)

One auctioneer in North Carolina begins his sales by making the following statement that actually elaborates the rule anticipatorily:

> If we have a disputed bid on an item, if we take a bid from somebody else and you're biddin on the item, if you'll call our attention to it right there at the moment we'll put it up before you two people and sell it again. We feel like that's the fair way to do it.

Thus, this auctioneer even after he has sold an item, claims he would put it back up for sale if two people want it at the selling price, even though only one of those two actually had the winning bid.

Sometimes this rule is elaborated because of a mistake made by the auctioneer. The following demonstrates such a situation.

> (Auctioneer) At twenty-five dollar bid will you go six? Twenty-five now six? All in all through, twenty-five, will you go six? Your number sir sittin down. Number twenty-four, ok.
> (Bidder number twenty-three) Hey!
> (Auctioneer) Hold it, hold it, hold it. Something went wrong. Sell it to twenty-three. You bid twenty-five too? Where is that man at? You had twenty-five and he has twenty-five. Will you give twenty-six.
> Seven (to bidder twenty-three)
> Eight (to bidder twenty-four)
> Nine (to bidder twenty-three)
> Thirty (to bidder twenty-four)
> And one (to bidder twenty-three)
> And two (to bidder twenty-four)
> Three (to bidder twenty-three)
> Four? (to bidder twenty-four)
> Thirty-three
> You four? (to bidder twenty-four) Sold it, thirty-three, to bidder number twenty-three instead of twenty-four. And gentlemen I am sorry. It happens to the best of 'em, and there's no way you can help it. (North Carolina auctioneer)

Auctioneers, in conjunction with their ringmen, regularly elaborate the rule in an inappropriate way. An example:

> A good ring man will, when you sell out, you know the guy really bid after you sold it, will say 'No no no, I had it here' see, he'll claim that as the bid. Then they can open it up . . . cause the guy's already bid. And a good wide awake ringman will grab that, see, when you sell out he'll say, 'Oh no no no I had it right here.' He didn't but he knew that guy bid after it already sold . . . grab every opportunity you get to make more money, that's what they pay you for.

This method is seen as inappropriate and, accordingly, is kept secret from the audience. Presumably, if the members of the audience were made aware of it, the auctioneer and his ringman would be discredited.

The preceding is a listing of the situated rules and their accompanying elaborations governing interaction at the country auction. Chapter Five will now address the relationship between these rules and subjective situational definitions and some possible directions for continued research in this area.

CHAPTER V

SITUATED RULES AND DEFINITIONAL CONSTRUCTION: SOME CONCLUSIONS

The foregoing chapter has attempted to break down the auction situation into its component parts. Any culturally defined situation, including the auction, is composed of a collection of acting individuals. Accordingly, it was hypothesized that on the lowest level these individuals were following culturally determined action directives. These directives enable them to act so as to produce a situation recognizable to all culturally in-the-know observers as an auction. The numbered rules stated above are proposed as the situated action directives that attach to the two primary roles available to participants in the country auction.[1]

Objective rules provide the participant with the actual physical content his action must contain (e.g., when actually to bid, or what the auctioneer's chant must contain). Moreover they also predetermine the general goals that must attach to any socially standardized and regulated situational role. To follow the rules attaching to the role of bidder

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[1]Although the rules discussed in this paper are focused only on the country auction, for the most part they would probably be applicable with only slight variation to most commonly occurring auction forms.

is to approach the goal of purchasing an item through negotiation. To occupy the role of auctioneer while an auction is in progress is to approach the goal of obtaining the maximum money available for any particular item put up for sale.

Thus, whether or not a conscious subjective decision may have been made prior to occupying any situational role and results in incumbency in that role, once the actor finds himself in that role he is subject to the rules of that role. The very fact of incumbency in a role is not necessarily the result of a consciously made decision. The observer at an auction may find himself momentarily in the bidder's role and subject to bidder's rules if he makes an inappropriate physical movement during a bidding sequence. Such a situation is the result of ignorance of, or inattention to, the rules.

The point being made is this. An actor may enter the auction situation and define it as one in which he will maximize his ability to obtain certain desired items. Nevertheless, once he occupies the bidder role that is the vehicle for his end, he must abide by the objective situated rules that define how that goal is to be achieved. He must bid according to the rules of bidding, he must negotiate in good faith, and he must be willing to accept the consequences of his negotiations. In the same way, a boxer achieves the goal of victory only within the rules of fair play, and the

basketball player moves toward his goal only through using prescribed methods of ball transport.

Is individual concordance with the rules perhaps not due to the convergence of personal goals and institutionalized goals? This does not seem to be a valid explanation. A most compelling argument can be made against this. If a bidder's subjective goal in a particular bidding sequence were not to obtain an item but rather to prevent a competitor from obtaining that item, he would still be subject to each and every stated rule of bidding. The particular motives that shape a person's definition of the situation, then, do not influence the basic pattern of his action in that situation. Of course, if an actor defined the situation as one to be disrupted, he might act in opposition to the rules. But, even in this case he would be negatively subject to the rules. Thus, he would be subject to the rules, for to disrupt he would have to formulate action in terms of what the rules prohibited.

Some Conclusions

The rules stated above were observed to be the best first approximations characterizing the stable features of the auction situation. Bidders, regardless of their manner of bidding, of the item they bid on, or of their purpose for bidding, acted with reference to the numbered rules. Auctioneers, regardless of the specific goal-oriented tactics they employed,

also performed their roles with scrupulous attention to the rules. On the basis of this evidence it must be concluded that in the auction situation a corpus of rules exists that is attended to by every knowledgeable auction participant. Collectively these rules form the objective and observable characteristics that comprise the auction. Without adherence to these rules in actual action the auction would no longer be recognizable to in-the-know actors as such but would assume a different character. Hypothetically, then, if one by one the twenty-eight situated auction rules were to be systematically disobeyed or supplanted by other rules, one at a time, by the time all twenty-eight were discarded what once was an auction would have become a situation of an entirely different character. We now have no way of identifying this new situation. Research in other areas may bear out the foregoing general position. To observe how situations could be altered by substituting other guidelines for the constitutive rules of the situation would be an interesting focus for future research, a sort of social alchemy.

Perhaps we have simply succeeded in producing a tautology: an auction is what we say it is. If we had a crowd of people and substituted new people for the old participants, to say that it is a different crowd would be stating the obvious and would be tautological. But, the sociologically more interesting questions would be which, or how few, persons could be substituted to alter the nature of the

crowd completely. One could hypothesize that the change of the leader might significantly change the crowd more drastically than if a single anonymous participant were to be substituted. If, in the early 1960's, we desired to alter the nature of the New York Yankee baseball team we might, as knowledgeable baseball fans, have removed Mickey Mantle from the lineup as opposed to some insignificant relief pitcher.

In the same way, with reference to the auction, we have not concluded that the twenty-eight situated rules are constitutive of "auction" simply because we have defined an auction as made up of those rules. Rather, two sociological reasons compel this. First, the twenty-eight rules were seen to be followed by actual auction participants. These rules were not merely a mental construct imposed by the researcher. Second, these rules were observed actually to affect the stability of the situation when disobeyed or altered whereas other activity by participants was observed to be non-reactive upon the auction situation. Thus, whether a bidder was black or caucasion had no effect on the situation. In fact, physical and ascriptive characteristics of bidders seemed irrelevant to the auction, with the possible exception of age.

However, to identify and observe the objective situated components of the auction situation was only one of the thrusts of this research, albeit the major one. The question of how these objective rules interact with subjective

definitions was also raised. Could situated rules carry with them elaborations to which, through selective usage, individuals committed to action their personal subjective situational definitions? In this connection the research can be seen to be only partially successful.

Although all the objective situated rules discussed were observed while in actual use, not all of these rules had elaborations attached to them. Some, notably numbers two, three, four, and eight seemed to be absolute rules not subject to the whims of individual definition and elaboration. Others, like rules number one, six, twenty, twenty-two, and twenty-six were accompanied by many acceptable elaboration In the writer's opinion those rules not found to have elaborations are not absolute. Rather, at the time of observation no elaboration happened to be in use.

Particularly from the observation of auctioneers we can tentatively conclude that the choice to elaborate a rule is determined by whether or not the objective situational definitions coincide closely enough with the actor's personal definition of the situation. As has been pointed out in Chapter One, the construction of a subjective definition of the situation is an active process (Znaniecki, 1963), one requiring reflection. If an actor does not deviate from the situated rules as stated but merely obeys them, he can not be construed to have constructed a subjective situational definition that differs significantly from the objective

cultural definition. If an actor, however, must elaborate a rule, then his situational definition can be assumed to differ significantly enough from the objective one to require active reflection on and manipulation of the action environment. Thus, if an auctioneer substitutes a ten-fifteen increment bid calling method for a standard uniform increment (rule number twenty-two), he is attempting to maximize his monetary gain in a situation perhaps defined by him as one difficult to handle in terms of obtaining "true" value for an item. Alternatively, if the auctioneer wishes to retain control over the minimum sale price of an item, he must consciously produce an atmosphere in which rule number twenty-seven (an auctioneer must sell an item regardless of its final price to the highest bidder) can be elaborated. He must make known to the crowd his intentions and convince them of his honorable intent, as did the auctioneer cited in connection with rule number twenty-seven.

Another example of this conscious rule elaboration resulting from subjective situational definition can be seen to have occurred in connection with rule number fourteen, the rule of caveat emptor. A bidder may define the situation as one in which he must be protected against buying a faulty item. This situation might occur when the item up for sale is a household appliance such as a television set or a cake mixer. An item like this would be of little use for the buyer unless it is in working order. The bidder may elaborate

this rule by asking for an explicit warranty from the auctioneer. This kind of elaboration requires much more than simple adherence to the rule and requires the bidder's active reflection on the exigencies of the situation.

One final example will clarify the point. According to rule number fifteen the buyer must accept his purchase regardless of the degree to which it conforms to his expectations of it. He must keep up the pretense that, "after all, what happens at the auction is 'all in good fun.'" In Chapter Four the woman who realized she had no use for a washtub stand she had just purchased was cited. Rather than break the rule by giving vent to the feelings of annoyance she felt at having made an unwise purchase, she elaborated the rule by jokingly asking if anyone around her wished to take it off her hands. Her action enabled her to act more in accordance with subjective situational definition manifest in her dissatisfaction while at the same time adhering to the rule that prohibited the outward expression of disgruntlement. She elaborated the rule in such a way as to keep the auction "all in good fun."

The reader should not infer that all subjective definitions of the situation at variance with applicable rules result in rule elaboration. This was not born out. This research was only sensitive to definitions resulting in overt action and does not allow any conclusions about definitions which do not result in overt action. Nevertheless, an

individual might possibly manipulate the rules in his mind without actually implementing those elaborations.

After an examination of the rules presented in Chapter Four, the following two propositions have resulted. (1) In the auction situation objective situated rules are often accompanied by elaborations. (2) Actors in the auction situation often use available elaborations attached to situated rules the better to carry out their personal definitions of the situation. Definitions of the situation brought forth in action are goal oriented. Thus, in reviewing the situated rules and elaborations most elaborations attaching to rules had as their major thrust the furtherance of goal attainment. Auctioneers elaborated rules to enhance their monetary rewards while bidders elaborated them to enhance either the value they got for their money or to lower the amount of money they had to pay to purchase an item.

The writer can only provisionally recommend the above statements. Situated rules are elaborated in the same fashion by many different participants. One can conclude that, although many different subjective situational definitions were possible, only a limited number of action possibilities were available to choose from. However, the participants were never interviewed to determine their actual subjective perceptions of the situation. Therefore, we have no way of determining if similar elaborations were the result of similar situational definitions. Neither can we even conclude

with certainty that situational definitions at variance with situated rules did indeed result in rule elaboration. Nevertheless, that is the conclusion we propose. At this point we can only say that the research evidence points to the conclusion that situated rules are indeed accompanied by elaboration, and those elaborations are utilized by participants in transferring their subjective situational definitions into goal oriented behavior.

Future research efforts might fruitfully use the following procedure. After a thorough investigation discloses the situated rules and their accompanying elaborations in any given situation, participants in one or more incidents of that situation should then be interviewed in depth concerning their perceptions of situations in which specific rules are illustrated. How would they react in such a situation? Does such a situation seem correct to them? Participants should also be given the opportunity to produce orally for the researcher the situational definitions that accompanied what the researcher has already identified as a rule elaboration. In this manner some general theory could be arrived at concerning the relationship between participant situational perception, participant action, and situated rules of situations.

In connection with the elaboration of situated rules the following question was also posed earlier in this paper. Does the acceptance or rejection of a subjective situational

definition depend on that definition's degree of concordance with the available culturally stipulated rules of usage and the alternatives (elaborations) attached to those rules? In other words, whether an individual's action based on his subjective situational definition, on the one hand, fits smoothly into the general flow of the situation or, on the other hand, disrupts that flow is a function of the degree to which that action (based on a subjective definition) conforms to the situated rules and their culturally approved elaborations. Again, as above, the tentative conclusion is in the affirmative. Personal definitions that do not fall within some, here unspecified, range of conformity with situated rules do indeed result in rejection by other actors in the situation.

Does this conclusion again seem to state the obvious: behavior must conform to social standards or face sanctions? But our statement says more than this. By positing the specific rules comprising a situation one is in a better position to identify exactly what is being sanctioned and why. Thus, when we say that an auctioneer may not use a shill because it is dishonest and culturally sanctioned, we know very little that is new. By specifying situated rules we can, however, state with some certainty that the use of a shill is an inappropriate situational response by the auctioneer. This response specifically violates the following basic and constitutive rules of the situation: (1) Rule number six; bidding may take place only within the time

period between the auctioneer's first call for bids and his announcement that the item has been sold. In using a shill the auctioneer has, in essence, arranged bids before the bidding sequence begins. (2) Rule number sixteen; bidders are who they purport themselves to be. The shill violates this rule in that he pretends to be a bidder following the various goals that bidders follow but in reality is working for the auctioneer and is thus subject to auctioneer goals, not bidder goals. (3) Rule number eight; each bid is to be viewed by the bidder as potentially the final bid of the interaction. For all intents and purposes the shill views his bid not as a final bid but as a step to get others to bid. In most cases he is not prepared to have his bid buy the item up for sale. (4) Rule number twenty-seven; an auctioneer must sell an item regardless of its final price to the highest bidder. The use of a shill violates this rule in the following way: when the shill actually bids in order to buy an item because the auctioneer is not able to get a high enough price for it, he is excluding the "real" highest bidder from his rightful prize.

The positing of situated rules provides a convenient and explicit framework, taken from the situation itself, in which to observe deviation. Although this research was not able to determine when a situational definition "went too far" and was rejected, such boundaries could be ascertained with the help of further research. For example, an auctioneer is

limited in the rule elaborations allowed to him. He is strictly constrained from elaborating rules involving the covert use of other persons to create deception. He is also constrained from taking unfair advantage of uninitiated auction participants. Auctioneers feel that even speaking in public about such deceptions places them in a position of jeopardy (see rules twenty-four, twenty-seven and twenty-eight). If an auctioneer were indeed to be found using such elaborations, he would be subject to immediate sanction in the form of being discredited. On the other hand, the auctioneer, elaborating rule number twenty-six, is permitted to manipulate his chant in order to achieve the same end as the above tactics achieve, i.e., to get the most money on an item up for sale. What makes one type of elaboration valid while the other results in the auctioneer's being discredited? What are the parameters that define when a sanction will occur and when it will not?[2] In terms of the auctioneer's being discredited, our observations point to its source in the degree of control participants feel they exercise over the situation. Thus, a bidder cannot for all practical purposes defend himself against a shill placed by the auctioneer in the audience, but he can counter the auctioneer's attempt to manipulate the rules of bid calling by using the techniques available to him

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[2]For some discussion of the concept of being discredited see Goffman, 1959:58-66 and Garfinkel, 1955:420-424.

in his bidding procedures.

This research has provided ample evidence to support the contention that situational definitions not conforming to situated rules and their allowable elaborations result in momentary or even prolonged interactive breakdown. The previous paragraph is just one example. Others, as stated in Chapter Four, were discussed under rules number three, four, six, seven, sixteen, seventeen, and twenty-two.

Some Final Conclusions and a Summary

The title of this study expresses the idea that a relationship exists between cultural continuity and subjective situational definitions. That question has not yet been sufficiently explicitly examined. This relationship will now be addressed.

Throughout this paper we have been attempting to show that the traditional approach to the study of subjective definitions of the situation was not adequate to the task of discovering some underlying theory about the general nature of such definitions. Peter McHugh (1968), seeing this deficiency, attempted to uncover the methodology by which any actor constructs a definition that becomes his own personal definition of the situation. The results of his work are discussed above. It became our task to examine, not the specific definitions resulting from personal reflection on the situation, but rather, the situation in which such

constructions occurred. We used the country auction as a source of empirical data. We endeavoured not to examine how definitions are constructed, but from what cultural material they are constructed. More specifically, in any situation, what elements of the situation must the actor be cognizant of to produce not only the situation itself but also his own culturally acceptable definition of that situation?

A growing body of literature (Cicourel, 1970; McHugh, 1968; Garfinkel, 1963) points to an underlying culturally determined and socially shared body of rules as candidates for the cultural material upon which both situations and definitions about situation are built. These rules were called situated and non-situated rules here. We conclude that because non-situated rules, i.e., rules of situations, are rules that have been proposed (Cicourel, 1970; Garfinkel, 1963) to be in use in all situations, regardless of their situational content, these rules could not account for differences in subjective definitions in a single situation. Rules of this type give the cultural logic around which a definition of the situation was constructed, not the content of that definition. In terms of the overall question concerning the preservation of cultural continuity, these non-situated rules preserve the cognitive continuity of a culture, i.e., the logic to be followed in perceiving things. It was therefore proposed that individuals were able to reconstruct from time to time any particular culturally standardized

situation via situated rules. It was through the individual choice and use of the various elaborations accompanying situated rules that he was able to commit to action his personal definition of the situation. Regardless of the form his definition was to take, it was presumed to follow the logic of the non-situated rules, as McHugh's study pointed out.

The task then became one of the first choosing a situation and explicating the situated rules which actors followed. Since this particular task has been attempted only rarely, (Cavan, 1966) few if any guidelines were available. This problem alone, that of explicating the situated rules, occupied most of our attention, and its results were presented in the previous chapter.

From the examination of these rules some conclusions, stated at the outset of the chapter, were drawn. In addition, however, the following general assertions can be made by following the data. (1) Situated rules, taken collectively in any given situation, can be seen to comprise the parameters of action for any given situation.[3] (2) Complete inattention by participating actors to one or more situated rules results

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[3]Imershein (1974:11-12) points up a difficulty that is usually not addressed by theorists in the area of rules of and in situations. ". . . How does the actor know how to use basic rules or interpretive procedures correctly? Are there more rules which specify this? If so, then there is a never-ending regression of rules for rules for rules." Although we have not dealt with this dilemma here, it should not be overlooked.

in the situation's being severely jeopardized as an ongoing social product. The situation becomes faced with interactive breakdown. (3) Complete inattention by participating actors to one or more situated rule results in the situation's being significantly altered in relation to other similarly defined situations in which all rules are attended to. The situation becomes discontinuous in terms of other situations. (4) Persons construct their personal subjective situational definitions with reference to the parameters of the situation as defined by the situated rules and their elaborations. (5) If personal definitions do not coincide with situated rules those rules may be elaborated on by participants in culturally specified ways. Such elaboration is a conscious and deliberate endeavor by the elaborating participant. (6) If action resulting from personal subjective situational definitions is based on elaborations of situated rules not permitted under those rules, the action will be rejected by participating actors as inappropriate to the situation. (7) The participants' rejection of action deemed inappropriate will take the form of a momentary or prolonged break from the "normal" course of action. It may also take the form of discrediting the violating individual. Thus, for example, in the auction situation, the auctioneer ran the risk of being discredited if he used a shill. The bidder also ran such a risk if, for example, he violated rule number four dealing with not bidding against oneself. Discrediting in this

instance took the form of being placed in a category of persons who are not in-the-know about things people are expected to be in the know about, i.e., cultural rules, duties, rights, and obligations. This leads to one final conclusion. (8) An invalid elaboration, one that runs the risk of sanction, is caused by one of two factors: an attempt to use a rule inappropriately, or non-adherence to the rule itself due to ignorance or to conscious deviance.

In summary, it has been shown that culturally standardized situations can be conceptualized, both analytically and concretely, in terms of the situated rules governing action in such situations. Actors are engaged in a two-fold process of creating and sustaining particular situations by closely following the rules governing behavior in these situations. Thus, if actors did not follow appropriate situated rules in the first place, a given situation would never come to exist. Furthermore, if those rules were not followed after a situation was created, it would cease to exist as an ongoing product of social interaction.

From these findings we have concluded that in order to preserve culturally common situations over time and from place to place, persons are given culturally only limited latitude within which to construct subjective definitions upon which to base future action. Action based on these subjective definitions is subject to situated rules and their accompanying elaborations for verification as to its appropriateness

within the situation. Therefore, such situational definitions are concluded to have been constructed with strict reference to the boundaries imposed by the situated rules.

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APPENDIX

MISSOURI AUCTION SCHOOL DAILY SCHEDULE: SAMPLE

9:00 A.M.	-	Attendance is taken and a brief summary of the coming day's events is given by an instructor.
9:15	-	The student body breaks up into four or five smaller units for drill sessions. Each group is accompanied by an instructor and is drilled on their auctioneer chant or is lectured to on some aspect of the auction business.
10:00	-	Entire student body reassembles for a lecture by an instructor of the school. Such lectures might cover any one of the following topics: advertising a sale, booking a sale, setting up a sale, the chant, tobacco auctioneering, livestock auctions, using public address systems, real estate sales, knowing your merchandise, ring work, legal contracts, or the National Auctioneers Association.
11:00	-	Group breaks up into four or five units for drill sessions.
12:00 P.M.	-	Lunch
1:00	-	Lecture to entire student body on some aspect of the auction business.
2:00	-	Small group drill sessions.
3:00	-	Lecture to entire student body.
4:00	-	Lecture to entire student body.
5:00	-	Dinner
7:00	-	Mock auction put on by students. Students take turns acting as the auctioneer and the ring man while other students act as buyers. Inexpensive items are actually sold.

GLOSSARY OF AUCTION TERMS

Absolute auction: A descriptive term applied to auctions in which all items put up for sale are to be sold to the highest bidder regardless of the price.

Auction: A form of economic exchange in which people compete via increasing monetary offers for the right to buy an item placed up for sale. The auction method of exchange assigns to the person making the highest monetary offer the right, and the obligation, to purchase a particular item.

Auction barn: An indoor enclosure in which auctions are held at periodic intervals.

Auctioneer: The organizer of an auction sale and the solicitor of monetary offers from prospective buyers. The auctioneer may be employed by the owner of sale merchandise and work for him on a commission basis, or buy merchandise outright and then sell it at auction.

Auction House: See auction barn.

Bidder: Any person who submits to an auctioneer a monetary offer on merchandise with the intention of becoming the owner of that merchandise.

Buyer: Any bidder at an auction who has successfully negotiated for the purchase of an item.

By-bidder: A person employed by the auctioneer or owner to buy items if bidders do not bid high enough on any given item. The by-bidder does not reveal his true identity to other crowd members, and, in that sense, functions as a shill.

Catch the bid: To catch a bid is to identify a bidder's bid and to submit that bid to the auctioneer. This is done by a ringman or the auctioneer himself.

Chant: A sing song used by the auctioneer to inform the crowd of the present bid on an item and the bid that is being asked. The amount bid is combined with the amount asked to create the chant.

Colonel: An honorary title given to auctioneers. This appellation is used to a greater or lesser degree in different areas of the country.

Come in at: To enter the negotiation for an item in the role of bidder by submitting a bid. Thus if a bidder bid two dollars it is said that "he came in at two dollars."

Country auction: An informal term applied to auction sales usually held in rural settings. Such auctions usually deal with the following classes of merchandise: household goods, antiques, farm machinery, furniture, tools, and odds and ends.

Crying the bid: A phrase used to identify the auctioneer's act of informing the crowd of the bid and asking for the next bid. The chant is the vehicle through which the auctioneer cries the bid.

Cut bid: A bid submitted to the auctioneer that is less than the amount he asked for in the chant. For example, Auctioneer: "Ten dollar bid, now fifteen, who'll give me fifteen." Bidder: "Twelve-fifty." Auctioneer: "Twelve-fifty then, now fifteen.

Filler words: A word or words used in the auctioneer's chant to connect the amount bid with the amount asked. Examples of such words are as follows: "Now" as in "I got fifty-five now sixty." or "Who'll make it?" as in "Thirty-six dollars, who'll make it thirty-seven?"

Handle: The repeated part of a monetary amount that is frequently left off in the chant. Thus, if an auctioneer is bid two hundred and thirty-five dollars he may say the following. "Two hundred thirty-five, who'll make it thirty-six?

Who'll make it thirty-six? Who'll make it thirty-six." The auctioneer left off the handle, two hundred.

Increment: The difference between the amount bid and the amount asked for by the auctioneer.

Knock down: To sell an item. After an auctioneer can get no further bids on an item he sells it or "knocks it down" to the highest bidder.

Lot: Any item or group of items put up for sale as a unit at an auction.

NAA: National Auctioneers Association.

Reserve Price: The owner of merchandise for sale at an auction may place a minimum amount he must receive on particular items before he will allow the items to be sold. This is a reserve price.

Right price: The right price is an auctioneer's term for the price the auctioneer feels an item is worth and should be obtained from bidders.

Ring: An area immediately in front of or surrounding the auctioneer and occupied by a ringman or ringmen. This area is kept free of bidders and crowd members.

Ringman: A person in the employ of an auctioneer and charged with the job of identifying the bid of a crowd member and relaying it to the auctioneer. The ringman also actively solicits bids from the crowd and exhibits the item that is up for sale. He occupies the area called the ring.

Sale: A term synonymous with the term auction. An auctioneer, for example, might say "We're gonna have a good sale today."

Selling by the numbers: A method by which auctioneers assign a number to all prospective bidders for the purpose of easier identification. When a person buys an item he identifies himself by his number.

Sell out:	See Knock down.
Shill:	In the auction context a shill is a person in the employ of an auctioneer who impersonates an independent bidder. It is the shill's job to bid on items in order to drive the price up. In certain circumstances a shill will actually buy an item if a price satisfactory to the auctioneer can not be attained from other bidders. See By-bidder.
Spotting a bid:	See Catch the bid.
Stem:	See Handle.
Take 'em:	To accept a bid.
Working the crowd:	A technique used by ringmen and auctioneers in which the crowd is exhorted to bid more money. Individual crowd members may also be focused on and asked to bid if they have shown any previous interest in an item.
Yea!:	A word used by ringmen to indicate to the auctioneer that he has found a person willing to bid what the auctioneer was asking for in his chant.
Yup!:	See Yea!